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*Warrior, priest, & statesman; or, English
heroes in the thirteenth century*

William Henry Davenport Adams



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WARRIOR, PRIEST, AND STATESMAN.

(Frontispiece.)

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WARRIOR, PRIEST, & STATESMAN;

OR,

ENGLISH HEROES

IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

BY

W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS,

AUTHOR OF "BEFORE THE CONQUEST," "SWORD AND PEN," "CIRCLE OF THE YEAR,"
"EVERYDAY OBJECTS," ETC., ETC.



"Though Fortune's malice overthrow my state,
My mind exceeds the compass of her wheel."

—SHAKESPEARE.

"Whose life was England's glory."

—*Ibid.*

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P R E F A C E.



THE present volume contains three biographical Studies illustrative of the great political and religious movements which took place in England during the reigns of Henry II., John, and Henry III. These studies are devoted to Thomas à Becket, Stephen Langton, and Simon de Montfort. Of men such as these any nation might well be proud; and of each it may be said that, whatever his errors or failings, he lived to do the State some service. I have often wondered that no popular sketches of their careers, written from an impartial stand-point,—or, at least, written from the stand-point of an Englishman desirous of doing justice to English worthies,—had never appeared: such sketches, I mean, as might be acceptable to the general reader, or useful in the higher classes of our schools, and yet not offensive to the historical student. It seemed to me that there was a deficiency to be supplied, and I have conscientiously endeavoured to supply it.

The view taken in the following pages of the character of Thomas à Becket is not altogether the popular one. Whether it is justifiable, the facts adduced will enable an unprejudiced

reader to determine. Of Simon de Montfort it will be seen that I have spoken in terms of almost unrestricted eulogy. After honestly studying his career in the old records, I could find very little to censure, very much to praise. Truly I believe him to have been one of the noblest and most sagacious of those "rulers of men" to whose patriotism and self-denial our England owes her greatness.

I may be allowed to say, perhaps, that I have taken some pains to make this little book complete. I trust the critic will have no cause to complain of any lack of industry. The most trustworthy authorities have been carefully consulted, and a list of them is prefixed to each memoir; while, for the reader's convenience, the three Studies are united together by chronological tables, which record, with some degree of fulness, the chief events of the time.

W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS.

EDINBURGH, 1873.

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THOMAS À BECKET—"SAINT AND MARTYR,"

LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR OF ENGLAND, AND ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

O*F great vicissitudes in the judgment of successive ages, one of the most striking is to be found in the conflicting feelings with which different epochs have regarded the contest of Becket with Henry II. During its continuance, the public opinion of England and Europe was, if not unfavourable to the Archbishop, at least strongly divided. After its tragical close, the change from indifference or hostility to unbounded veneration was instantaneous and universal. This veneration, after a duration of more than three centuries, was superseded, at least in England, by a contempt as general and profound as had been the previous admiration. And now, after three centuries more, the revolution of the wheel of fortune has again brought up, both at home and abroad, worshippers of the memory of St Thomas of Canterbury, who rival the most undoubting devotee that ever knelt at his shrine in the reign of the Plantagenet Kings. Indications are not wanting, that the pendulum which has been so violently swung to and fro, is at last about to settle into its proper place.*

DEAN STANLEY, *Historical Memorials of
Canterbury* (Edit. 1835).

CHRONOLOGICAL LANDMARKS

IN THE LIFE OF THOMAS À BECKET.

- A.D. 1118. Birth of Thomas Becket, afterwards called Thomas à Becket (December 21st).
- A.D. 1128. Educated at Merton Abbey, near Tooting, Surrey.
- A.D. 1135. Completes his education in London.
- A.D. 1139. Loses his mother.
- A.D. 1140-42. Works as an accountant in London.
- A.D. 1142. Enters the household of Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury.
- A.D. 1143. Studies at Bologna, under the patronage and at the cost of the Archbishop.
- A.D. 1144. Studies at Auxerre.
- A.D. 1145. Is employed in missions to the court of Rome.
- A.D. 1146-50. Enters the Church, and becomes Rector of St Mary le Strand, in London, and Orford, in Kent.
- A.D. 1153. Is promoted to the lucrative post of Archdeacon of Canterbury.
- A.D. 1155. Henry II. appoints him Chancellor of England.
- A.D. 1158. Becket takes part in the French war, and with his own hand unhorses Engebranc de Trie.
- A.D. 1159. Goes as ambassador to the French court.
- A.D. 1161-2. Is promoted to the Archbishopric of Canterbury.
- A.D. 1163. Attends the Council of Tours.
- A.D. 1163. Quarrels with Henry II.
- A.D. 1164. Accepts the "Constitutions of Clarendon." Disputes with the Archbishop of York. Is accused of peculation during his Chancellorship. Appeals to the people, and defies the King. Escapes from Northampton in disguise, and makes his way to France. Arrives at Pontigny.

-
- A.D. 1166. His cause is espoused by the Pope, who appoints him Legate. Proceeds to Vezelay, and on Whitsunday excommunicates the priests and knights who had shown most hostility towards him, and absolves the English Bishops from the oath they had taken to observe the Constitutions of Clarendon.
- A.D. 1167. The Pope appoints a commission to inquire into the causes of the strife between Becket and Henry II.
- A.D. 1168. A second commission appointed.
- A.D. 1169. Interview at Montmirail between the King and the Archbishop in the presence of Louis of France. A third commission appointed. Becket excommunicates the chief friends and counsellors of Henry.
 Second interview at Montmartre between Becket and the King, and an apparent reconciliation is effected.
- A.D. 1170. Another commission issued. England threatened with an interdict. Third meeting, at Sens, between Becket and Henry II. Terms of agreement concluded.
 Becket returns to England.
 Lands at Sandwich on the 1st of December.
 Proceeds to Canterbury amidst the acclamations of the multitude.
 Visits London.
 Returns to Canterbury, and on Christmas Day excommunicates certain of his enemies.
 The four knights arrive at Saltwood.
 Becket is murdered in the choir of Canterbury Cathedral, on Tuesday the 29th of December.



WARRIOR, PRIEST, AND STATESMAN.

BOOK I.

THOMAS À BECKET.

A.D. 1118-1170.

CHAPTER I.

AUTHORITIES.

“ O'er many a folio Time hath harshly treated,
Pores the pale student by the midnight lamp.”

IN treating of the life of Thomas à Becket, Chancellor of England, and afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, we have to treat of a singularly important period of English history, characterised by a long and severe struggle between the opposing powers of the State and the Church. If the leading events of that struggle are very differently represented by modern historians, and very widely misunderstood by modern readers, it is not because there exists any lack of information in reference to their causes and consequences. If its principal hero is painted by modern biographers from the most opposite points of view,—if he is now represented as a saint, and now as a man of violent passions and worldly lusts,—

if at one time he is transfigured into an English patriot, and at another degraded into a selfish and ambitious prelate,—it is not because the fullest statements of his conduct have not been handed down to us by contemporary observers. It may safely be asserted, that we possess more ample means of estimating Becket, both as a man and as a ruler, as a priest and a politician, than of almost any other English worthy during the reigns of all the Plantagenets. Original materials of every kind are at our disposal; chronicles, memoirs, private letters, state papers, the minutest records of his public and private life. His every action, and the actions of others, so far as they affected him, have been described and commented upon by men who were both eye-witnesses and actors. It has justly been said¹ that there are few of the world's heroes about the main features of whose history we can entertain so little doubt. Some unimportant contradictions may be detected among the cloud of witnesses; the accuracy of a date or the genuineness of a letter may occasionally be suspected; but the chief incidents of his remarkable career—a career at one time attaining to the dignity of an epic, now almost descending to the level of a farce, and finally closing with the sombre grandeur of a tragedy—are known to us as vividly and as distinctly as the occurrences of our own time.

It may be asked, then, Why does so strange a diversity of opinion exist? If we possess such full materials for examining the life and estimating the character of Becket, why do we represent him from points of view so diametrically opposite?

But it must be remembered that this very diversity is to be found in the original authorities. Some are the glowing eulogiums of panegyrists; others, the unscrupulous invectives of enemies. He had his friends and foes during life, who continued their struggle over his tomb; and the quarrel was

¹ *National Review*, x. 322.

taken up, and has been unceasingly carried on, by their descendants. So to one faction of writers he is the blessed and apostolical "St Thomas of Canterbury;" to the other, the unscrupulous and ambitious "Thomas à Becket." For it has been the misfortune of our hero that his late biographers have made his name a party cry, and that the controversy respecting his character has been embittered by religious feeling. He has been used as the stalking-horse under whose cover vehement partisans might hurl their bolts at not less vehement adversaries; and the events of the twelfth century have been perverted to point a moral and adorn a tale for the nineteenth.

In the following pages we hope to avoid this unjust and unreasonable mode of estimating the men and actions of the past. We shall endeavour to consider the character of Becket without prejudice, and to relate the story of his life without exaggerated colouring. He was in many things heroic: he occupied a great position in the history of his time; he contributed, according to his lights, to make England what England is; and all such men, whether Becketts or Langtons, Fitzwalters or De Montforts, an English writer is bound to regard with feelings of gratitude and admiration.

Before we proceed to our narrative, however, it seems desirable we should bring the reader acquainted with the authorities upon which it is based, both primary and secondary.

Foremost among the original authorities must be placed the following:—

Vita Sancti Thomæ, auctore *Edwardo Grim*;

Vita Sancti Thomæ, auctoris *Rogério de Pontiniaco*;

Vita Sancti Thomæ, auctori *Willelmo filio Stephani*;

Vita Sancti Thomæ, auctoribus *Joanne Salesberiensis et Alano Abbati
Teukesberiensis*;

Vita Sancti Thomæ, auctore *Willelmo Cantuariensi*;

Vita Sancti Thomæ, *Anonymo Lambethiensi*.

These six Lives, written by men contemporary, or nearly contemporary, with Becket, will be found in Dr Giles's "*Sanctus Thomas Cantuariensis*," a work of immense research, but grievously deficient in method and lucidity. The letters of Becket and of his friends, and those of Bishop Tobit, and other important personages, are contained in the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth volumes of the same work; and in the seventh and eighth is printed the valuable "*Vita Sancti Thomæ, auctore Herberto de Bosham*." The latter is specially interesting from the full details it affords of Becket's work as an archbishop, and his life in England and France; but as its author was not present at the martyrdom, he can give no information respecting that tragic scene. The deficiency is supplied by Edward Grim, who entered the Archbishop's service only a few days before his death, and was present at it; indeed, a sufferer by it, for in bravely defending his master, he lost an arm.

Roger of Pontigny tells us very little about Becket's residence at Pontigny, whose incidents he considers to have been familiar to his readers, but accumulates interesting facts respecting the early life and career of the Archbishop, apparently gathered from his own lips.

William Fitz-Stephen was clerk to Becket during his chancellorship, and, for that portion of his life, is a trustworthy authority.

Each biographer of Thomas has a strongly-marked individuality. Thus, as a good authority remarks,¹ "Edward Grim has a tendency to the marvellous, which he makes an effort to keep under control; Roger is a Frenchman, and shows a characteristic French ignorance of England and the English, and a sympathy with Becket in his struggle against Henry II.; William Fitz-Stephen has a firm touch for the picturesque, and his sketches are always graphic, and apparently not over-coloured;

¹ *National Review*, x. 331, 332.

Alan of Tewkesbury is generally sober and moderate, and seems to have felt his personal interest in the matter more than the other biographers; William of Canterbury's memoir is a fragment, and his personality, perhaps for this reason, does not very keenly impress the reader."

What shall we say of Herbert of Bosham? That he was a second Becket—a Becket in spirit, though not in ability; as impatient of opposition, as convinced of the rectitude of his cause, as prompt in striking an enemy. A writer already quoted remarks, that Herbert seems to have been the double of Thomas both in mind and body, and probably did the prelate little good by his constant companionship. Little as Becket needed encouragement in bold and violent measures, Herbert was always supplying that encouragement. Like his master, he feared not the face of man, nor bated his breath even in the presence of Henry II. Like his master, he was tall of stature and well-favoured; and, like Becket "in his unregenerate state," had no objection to display to the best advantage his physical perfections. These two loyal adherents appear in their several characters in that remarkable scene at Northampton we shall hereafter have to describe. The Archbishop, with the cross in his hand, sits defying the earthly king in the name of the King of heaven. Herbert, a very Boanerges, calls upon him to excommunicate every man present on the spot. William advises patience and quietness, and when forbidden to speak to his master, silently points to the figure of the crucified Saviour, who, in His worst agony, entreated the Father to forgive His enemies.

One of Becket's best biographers, whose "*Vita Sancti Thomæ*" is included in Dr Giles's collection, is John of Salisbury, and his letters are particularly valuable, because they are evidently the letters of a faithful friend, who was too honest a man to become a bigoted partisan. We believe his statements

may always be accepted without qualification, and that, as far as he goes, no historian can have a better guide.

In enumerating the original authorities, we must not forget the curious metrical Life, in French, by Guernes or Garnier of Pont St Mayence, which he completed within four years of the martyrdom. It was published by Professor Becker in 1864, from a MS. in the British Museum. Some of the Becket letters are here metamorphosed into French verse, and so disguised, as gipsies disguise stolen children, that their own father would not know them. Garnier had visited Canterbury, and conversed with Mary, Abbess of Barking, the Archbishop's sister; nay, he had seen the Archbishop himself, but in his earlier career, when he rode at the head of the English knights in the French campaign.

“ En Gascuingne fu-il lung tens par guerreier,
As Gascuns i kovine de lur chastens lesser,
En Normendie r'ont sun seinur grant mester,
Et jo l'vi sor Franceis plusur feiz chevaucher.”

Nor must we omit a reference to another of the chronicles in Dr Giles's collection, that of the anonymous writer whose MS. exists at Lambeth Palace. Some doubt is occasionally expressed respecting its authenticity; but we venture to think it one of the most valuable, as it is undoubtedly the most outspoken, of the contemporary Lives.

The annalists of the period on which Thomas à Becket stamped so markedly his individual impress are numerous and trustworthy. We refer to Roger of Hoveden, Gervase of Canterbury, William of Newburgh (a very impartial witness), Benedict of Peterborough (who furnishes an amusing list of miracles wrought at St Thomas's shrine), John of Brompton, Matthew Paris, and the “*Imagines Historiarum*,” by Ralph de Diceto, Dean of St Paul's (what may be termed a royalist

view of the controversy). Of these, Matthew Paris and John of Brompton wrote in the thirteenth century.¹

In the same century was written the metrical "Life and Martyrdom," by Robert of Gloucester ;² and in the fourteenth, the "Life," by Grandison, Bishop of Exeter.³

We now come to a brief examination of the modern authorities. The chief foreign writers are Reuter's "History of Alexander III.," quoted by Dean Milman ; Ozanam's "Deux Chanceliers d'Angleterre ;"⁴ and Buss's "Der Heilige Thomas und sein Kampf, für die Freiheit der Kirche."⁵ Thierry also introduces Becket into the vivid pictures of his "Norman Conquest of England."⁶

English literature is eminently rich in monographs devoted to the great Archbishop and his period. Lord Lyttelton's "History of Henry II."⁷ still commands the respect of the scholar ; and Mr Berington's work is the production of a candid, but not of a bigoted apologist. In Dr Lingard's "History of England," Becket is treated with a favourable bias, but in no spirit of servile adulation. For the ordinary reader, Dr Southey's sketch in his "Book of the Church" contains a lively and agreeable portrait of an heroic but erring man.

¹ We append the dates of these biographers : Roger of Hoveden, about 1150-1210 ; Gervase of Canterbury, 1150 ; William of Newburgh, b. 1136 ; Benedict of Peterborough, d. 1200 ; John of Brompton, 1200 ; Diceto, 1150 ; Matthew Paris, d. 1259.

² Printed for the Percy Society, and edited by Mr Black.

³ Quoted by Dean Stanley from the MS. in the Bodleian Library.

⁴ Ozanam is justly described by Stanley as one of the ablest of Becket's recent apologists. Published at Paris, 1836.

⁵ Published at Mainz, 1856. It is written from a strongly Catholic point of view, as the title indicates : "The Holy Thomas, and his Struggle for the Freedom of the Church."

⁶ We use the edition in 2 vols. published by Bohn.

⁷ The best edition is that of 1767, in four 4to volumes.

The first recent apologist of Becket was Mr R. Hurrell Froude, whose "Remains" includes a vivid description of the prelate's career, and an impressive account of his death.¹ Froude, however, makes no pretence to impartiality, and writes of the great statesman-priest as a hagiologist might write of a saintly anchorite or a virgin martyr. Equally bigoted, but inferior as a writer, is Canon Morris of Northampton in his "Life and Martyrdom of Saint Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Legate of the Holy See."²

As a contrast to the Roman Catholic Canon, we turn to Canon James Craigie Robertson of Canterbury, who, in his "Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury,"³ shows that, with all his learning, he is utterly deficient in sympathy with the heroic, utterly incapable of comprehending the greatness mingled with the meanness of Becket's character.

Of very great value is the admirable narrative in Dean Milman's "History of Latin Christianity,"⁴ of the struggle between the Archbishop and the King. It is not for us to praise a work which has taken its place among the masterpieces of English historical literature.

To Dr Giles we are indebted for the "Life and Letters of Thomas à Becket,"⁵ a work which evidences considerable research, but is deficient in arrangement, and very cumbrously written.

The account introduced into Dr Pauli's "History of England" is distinguished by erudition and sagacity, and by an impartial estimate of the struggle in which Becket perished.

Nothing need be said of the incidental narrative in the

¹ The greater part of the third volume (in which Dr Newman is said to have had a hand) is devoted to Becket.

² Published at London in 1859.

³ Published at London in 1859.

⁴ See the fifth volume, edition 1859 (in 9 vols.)

⁵ In two volumes, edition 1846.

"Pictorial History," or in Charles Knight's "Popular History of England." Mr William Longman, in his "Lectures," has been painstaking and moderate.

A most important monograph on the "Murder of Thomas à Becket," and another on "The Shrine of Becket," are included in Dean Stanley's "Historical Memorials of Canterbury."¹ Both display the Dean's most favourable characteristics; his wealth of allusion, his soberness of judgment, his lucidity of explanation, and his happy power of giving life and reality to the scenes and events of the past.

We may also direct the reader's attention to an interesting article in the *National Review*,² which deals impartially, and most ably, with the Archbishop's character, rightly condemning the exaggeration of partisanship on the one hand, and of prejudice on the other. "No fair-minded man," says the author, "who has at once mastered the history and literature of the twelfth century, and has attained the faculty of throwing himself with a lively interest into times so alien to our own, can rise from his studies without the conviction that Thomas of Canterbury, with all his faults, is justly entitled to a place among the worthies of whom England is proud."

An animated but superficial sketch of Becket forms one of Lord Campbell's "Lives of the Lord Chancellors of England."³ Its inferiority will be at once appreciated by any reader who compares it with the memoir, discriminative, just, and enlightened, in Dean Hook's "Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury."⁴

¹ See "Historical Memorials of Canterbury," 2d edition (1855).

² *National Review*, vol. x., No. 20, April 1860.

³ Published by Murray, 1845 (1st series, 3 vols.)

⁴ "Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury," vol. ii., edit. 1862.



CHAPTER II.

BECKET'S EARLY CAREER.

[A.D. 1118.]

"He was modest and pleasant in speech, in person tall and graceful; easily guided by worthy example; prudent beyond his years; combining the personal comeliness of youth with the gravity of mature manhood."—
WILLIAM OF CANTERBURY.

THE Lord knew, says the old chronicler,¹ and predestined the blessed Thomas before his birth, and showed his mother in a vision what manner of man her son would be. For in a dream she fancied that she bore within her the whole church of Canterbury; and immediately after the birth of the child, the midwife, lifting him up in her arms, exclaimed, "I have raised from the ground a future archbishop!" While he was still an infant in the cradle, his mother dreamed that she chided the nurse for not throwing a coverlet over him. "Nay, my lady," replied the nurse, "he has an excellent one over him." "Let me see it," said her mistress, and straightway the nurse brought the coverlet, and showed it to her; but when she began to unfold it, she found herself unable, and said to the mother, "It is too large for me to unfold it in this bedroom." "Nay, then," said the mother, "come into the hall, and there unfold it." The nurse obeyed,

¹ Fitz-Stephen, *apud* Dr Giles.

and again made the attempt, but again it proved of no avail. The mother, astonished, said, "Come out unto the market-place, which just now is empty, and you will surely there find room to unfold it." But the nurse was a third time foiled, and exclaimed to her mistress, "It has grown of such dimensions that I can see no end to it ; methinks all England would not be able to contain it."

This, then, adds our authority, was the manner of the birth of St Thomas, who was born in lawful wedlock, and of reputable parents. His father's name was Gilbert ; his mother's, Matilda. Both were citizens of the middle class, who neither made money by usance, nor practised any trade, but lived honourably upon their income.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that most of the foregoing details were invented after Becket rose to fame and power. But the truth of Fitz-Stephen's account of his parentage is confirmed by other authorities. The Lambeth biographer speaks of his hero's father as named Gilbert, and as honoured among the citizens of London,—whither he had migrated from Rome, his birthplace, attracted by its wealth and enterprise,—for the respectability of his birth, the vigour of his character, and the ampleness of his fortune. But, according to this writer, Becket's mother was named Rose, and was a native of Caen.

The popular legend which represents the mother of oriental birth has not the slightest claim upon our credit, but is too picturesque to be omitted.

It describes Gilbert as taking upon him in his youth the pilgrim's vows, and as proceeding to the Holy Land with a single attendant, named Richard. In the course of their wearisome journey they fell into an ambuscade, were made prisoners, and sold as slaves to a certain Amurath. After eighteen months' captivity, Gilbert grew into so much favour with his master, that he was allowed to wait upon him at table,

and then he became acquainted with Amurath's beautiful daughter, into whose willing ears he poured the tale of his sufferings, told her the story of his life, and explained the faith of Christians. His eloquence, and, we may suppose, his handsome person, had so great an influence on the Eastern damsel, that she declared herself anxious to embrace Christianity if he would pledge himself, by the creed he professed, to take her for his wife. Apprehensive of deceit, Gilbert hesitated; and an opportunity of escape offering itself, he gladly availed himself of it, and, after enduring many hardships, returned to his native land.

Amurath's daughter, on learning his departure, fell a prey to the most terrible anxiety. She could not live without her Gilbert, and she resolved to brave all dangers in the attempt to recover him, though ignorant of the reception he might accord to her if she proved successful in her quest.

We need not dwell upon her adventures or her sufferings. Encouraged by hope and faith and love, she triumphed over every obstacle, and at length reached England. By constantly repeating the words, "London! London!" she made her way to the capital, though her foreign dress and manners exposed her to the unfeeling laughter and ridicule of a people never too courteous to strangers. She wandered through the streets, crying "Gilbert! Gilbert!" incurring the suspicion of madness, until, passing before a certain house, she was seen and recognised by Gilbert's servant, Richard, who informed his master of the strange discovery. Gilbert, sorely puzzled, placed the poor wanderer in the house of a widow lady, and betook himself to the Bishop of London, who was sitting in council with six other bishops, to obtain his lordship's advice. Having told his story, simply but graphically, Gilbert waited for a word of counsel, and the Bishop of Chichester exclaimed, as if possessed with the spirit of prophecy, that it was the hand of God,

and not of man, which had conducted the fair Eastern maiden from so remote a land, and that she was destined to be the mother of a son, who, by his sanctity and sufferings, would exalt the whole Church, to the glory of Christ the Lord.

After this, nothing remained to be done but to baptize the lady into the Christian Church, and marry her to the man for whom she had endured so much.

They were blessed with much happiness, except that Gilbert's conscience was troubled because he had not fulfilled his vow and accomplished his pilgrimage. Seeing his ill-concealed regret, his wife nobly insisted on his executing, with zeal and devotion, the noble enterprise he had planned.

"For myself," she said, "I trust steadfastly in the Lord my God, who has called me to the knowledge of His name, and will not desert me when you are gone, but, as He once before preserved me from danger when I was ignorant of Him, so will He again protect me now. But, I pray you, leave Richard at home with me, that, by his knowledge of my native language, he may be able to provide for my necessities."

Thus encouraged, Gilbert set out for the Holy Land. In due time after his departure, his wife bore a son, who, when he returned after an absence of three years and a half, had grown into a beautiful boy, much affectioned by all his friends and neighbours.¹

From this quaint fiction we gladly turn to simple matter of fact.

Thomas, the son of Gilbert Becket of Rouen, and Rosa, or Matilda, his wife, was born on the 21st of December 1118, in his father's house, near the west end and on the north side of Chepe, in the city of London. Having been given to the world on the festival of St Thomas, he was named after that apostle, and baptized in St Mary's College

¹ "Quadrilogus," book i. c. 2—a very untrustworthy compilation.

Church ;¹ the ceremony being doubtlessly performed with great magnificence, as his father was one of the wealthiest citizens, and had been the *porteur*, or chief magistrate of the city.

The London in which Gilbert Becket held so distinguished a position had already attained to a very high degree of prosperity. It had its palaces and its splendid mansions, its well-stored shops, its mighty fortress, its seven double gates,² its populous suburbs, its boat-thronged river, fed by pleasant streams, the Old Bourne and the Fleet ; and around and about it were field and pasture, while the northern hills were clothed in wood, and immense forests spread far beyond. Its population was numerous ; though we may not believe Fitz-Stephen when he tells us that it could equip for the wars 20,000 horsemen and 60,000 foot.³ It counted thirteen large conventual, and 126 smaller parish churches, among which St Paul's, with its lofty spire, rose splendidly conspicuous. To three of these were attached schools, "famous for their privileges and ancient dignity." Here the scholars disputed, some dialectically, some demonstratively, those of different schools occasionally contending together in friendly emulation. Here, too, on certain festival days, the magistrates assembled, and were appropriately entertained with exhibitions of scholarship and wit. Holyday, in those brave times, was frequently kept by the citizens of London, who amused themselves, in the summer, with archery and moonlight dances ; in the winter, with baiting bulls or bears, and skating. The broad river, too, was almost daily the scene of revel ; for the Londoners of old were as partial as the Venetians to aquatic sports. Yet they found time for traffic and barter, and their stores were crowded with

¹ Newcourt, i. 448.

² Postern, Aldgate, Bishopsgate, Moorgate, Cripplegate, Aldersgate, Ludgate.

³ Fitz-Stephen, p. 4.

the choicest products of many nations. Merchants from all parts of the world resorted thither with their wares :

“ Arabia sent her gold ; its frankincense
The odorous Saba ; Scythia, her arms ;
Her oil of palms the fertile Babylon ;
The Nile its gems ; China its purple vests ;
Gallia her wines ; the North, its furs and skins.”

Moreover, says Fitz-Stephen, there was in this rich, populous, and festive city, where learning, religion, pleasure, and lucre were so devoutly cared for, a public ordinary among the wines exposed for sale in the vessels and the wine-cellars. There, every day, according to the season, all kinds of meats and dishes might be obtained, roast, baked, boiled, and fried ; fish, both large and small ; flesh of a common sort for the poor, of a more delicate kind for the rich ; venison, poultry, and game. If any one of the citizens was surprised by a visit from his friends, wearied with their journey, and unwilling to wait until fresh food could be purchased and prepared to satisfy their hunger,—

“ While nimble menials bread in baskets bring,
Towels for their hands, and water from the spring,”—

a servant was despatched to the quay, where he found everything that was wanted. Whatever the throng of soldiers or strangers entering the city or leaving it, at any hour of the day or night, no need was there that the former should come to fast, or the latter depart with empty stomachs ; they had only to repair, if they wished, to the quay, and provide themselves with whatever they required. Indeed, those whose tastes were dainty, might dispense with inquiries after pheasants or quails from Africa or Ionia when they saw the different delicacies that could be placed before them. This, then, concludes the

20 WARRIOR, PRIEST, AND STATESMAN.

character in a strain of reserve, was the public ordinary, and it was as habitual to the city as usual in promoting hospitality.

Now the brave and gentle London was Thomas Becket¹ born, and to one of his earliest schools he was sent at a very early age. He was fortunate, as all great men have been in his teacher, from whom he learned the fear of the Lord and the reverence due to the teacher of Christ, the holy Virgin Mary, whose love to her Divine Son, he adopted as his patroness, frequently invoking her name, and placing in her his trust.² He is described as endowed with many excellent gifts of mind and body: he was modest and pleasant in speech, tall and generous in person, much guided by good example, and prudent beyond his years, withholding the enjoyment of pleasures of youth until the maturity of a later age.³ His judgement was so mature and his conduct so pure, that he could answer the most difficult questions, even the subjects with which he was unacquainted; and so strong was his memory, that what he once learned he could remember and repeat. His most constant gift he bestowed freely upon all those who were his scholars, and in order that their education should be the mastery of memory in a time whose mind was distracted by such various pursuits.⁴

His teacher adopted a singular device for improving the memory of memory in his young charge. At regular intervals he caused him to be weighed, finding if the opposite scale is much heavier, that, and allowing as was necessary to lighten him, this measure of flesh, that, and allowing as was given to the poor, and the measure, and the simple and in her time, commended her well-beloved son to the special protection of

¹ There is some dispute as to our hero's name. By the contemporaries he seems to have been called Thomas of London, or Thomas de Cantuariis, and the title Thomas a Becket is of comparatively recent origin.

² John of Salisbury.

³ William of Salisbury.

⁴ John of Salisbury.



'What are you doing, you foolish old man? Your son ought to humble himself at *your* feet, not you at his.'—WARRIOR, PRIEST, AND STATESMAN, page 21.

the Virgin, in requital of her bounty to the poor. Thus did he spend the years of his childhood, under the fostering care of a noble mother, in the frugal economy of his father's house,¹ and in attendance upon the schools of the city.

From his earliest years this well-favoured and richly-gifted boy was destined to the spiritual warfare, and his parents took measure accordingly to provide him with a liberal education. The credulous biographer tells us that his father had received an intimation from Heaven of the future character of his son;² but we prefer to believe that a not unnatural ambition, excited by the remarkable ability of the young Thomas, induced him to place his son, then ten years old, under the care of Prior Robert, to be educated in the religious house of the canons of Merton.³

While he was studying there, the father one day came to see his son; and when the latter was introduced, the father prostrated himself at his feet. The Prior, who was present, remonstrated with him for such an act of servility: "What are you doing, you foolish old man? Your son ought to humble himself at *your* feet, not you at his." The father drew the Prior aside, and said, "I was not ignorant, my lord, of what I was doing; for that boy of mine will hereafter be great in the sight of the Lord."

Such were the anecdotes with which the old writers, after their hero had attained to the dignity of saintship, loved to entwine the simple narrative of his early proficiency as a scholar.

That he retained in later life a grateful affection for the place

¹ His father, as Thomas grew up, suffered many losses, especially from frequent fires.—*William of Canterbury*.

² Fitz-Stephen.

³ This house had been recently founded by Earl de Warrenne and his Countess. Some remains are still extant on the banks of the Wandle, at Merton in Surrey.

of his education, we know from two striking incidents. When, after his consecration, he was constrained to adopt a clerical costume, he attired himself, in remembrance of his early preceptors, as a canon regular; and in his last hours, previous to his murder, we find him attended by the venerable Prior from whom he had received his youthful instruction.

From Merton he returned to London, where he again attended one or other of its celebrated schools. It is important to remark, however, that Becket never became a scholar. It may be that his very ability—the facility with which he acquired, and the tenacity with which he retained—unfitted him for laborious study; and we know he was strongly attached to those athletic sports in which his personal gifts eminently fitted him to excel. Becket, in truth, could never have become “the pale recluse,” wasting the midnight oil over illuminated parchments; his genius was an active and restless genius, and his place was not in the cloistered shade, but in the tumult and press of the outer world.

Of this fact his parents seem to have been aware. At all events, they determined to place at his disposal every weapon by which, in those days, men carved their way to power and distinction.

For this purpose they procured him admission into the household of a great noble, Richer de l'Aigle or de Aquila, the lord of Pevensey Castle, and the intimate friend of the wealthy London citizen.

We can imagine the delight, remarks Dean Hook, with which this active and accomplished youth betook himself from the—

“*Fumus et opes strepitumque Romæ,*”

to the woodland shades of Pevensey; for we have abundant evidence that Becket keenly appreciated the enjoyments of a rural life.

The Archbishops of Canterbury possessed several manors in the county of Sussex, where traditions still linger—or, as Tennyson says, “the violet of a legend” still flourishes—in relation to him who was not unjustly regarded as the greatest of the English primates. The site of Becket’s manor-house or country seat is still pointed out at West Tarring; and, what is more remarkable, the sites, too, of his menagerie and brewhouse. The menagerie, according to tradition, was filled with monkeys. The fig-tree thrives astonishingly in this genial district of Sussex; and another, and not an improbable, tradition asserts that it was introduced by Becket, who brought the first plant from Italy.¹

The horticultural tastes and the love of rural pleasures which the great Archbishop indulged during the happier hours of his busy career he probably acquired during the peaceful period of his residence at Pevensey.²

If we may believe two of his biographers,³ he met with a singular escape from destruction while a guest of Richer de l’Aigle.

The noble and his young attendant were out hawking, and in crossing a foot-bridge thrown across a mill-dam, when the mill was at work, and the current running fiercely towards it, Becket’s horse stumbled, and flung his rider into the stream. Anxious to save his falcon, which had dropped from his wrist, Thomas was carried rapidly towards the mill-wheel. A loud cry of alarm was raised by the spectators, but as no help could be afforded, his death seemed inevitable, when the mill stopped

¹ According to other authorities, the fig was first planted here by Richard de la Wych, Bishop of Chichester, who “grafted fruit trees at Tarring with his own hand.” The present orchard, containing about one hundred trees, was planted in 1745.

² Dean Hook’s “Lives of the Archbishops,” ii. 360.

³ The story is told both by Edward Grim and Roger of Pontigny.

with miraculous suddenness. The obvious explanation is, that the miller had heard the shouts for assistance, had checked his mill, and repaired to the spot in time to extricate the young hawk from his unpleasant position.

Soon after attaining his twenty-first year, he lost his admirable and beloved mother. This event probably recalled him from Sussex to his home, whence, instead of returning to the "Castle of the Eagle," he repaired to Paris, for the purpose of completing his education and polishing his manners (A.D. 1140).

How long he remained at Paris, or to what particular studies he applied himself, we are unable to say ; but it is allowable to presume he did not neglect those military exercises and courtly graces of which Paris has ever been the favourite school. He was recalled to London by his father's failure in business ; and for three years was content to earn his livelihood as a clerk in the house of a wealthy kinsman, Master Eightpenny.¹

From a position so unsuited to his genius and character he was happily rescued by an accidental circumstance.

At the invitation of Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, two learned civilians, Archdeacon Baldwin and Master Eustace, came on a visit from Normandy. On former occasions they had lodged at the house of Gilbert Becket, and made the acquaintance of his son, who possessed, as we shall see, a remarkable power of winning the attachment and goodwill of all not prejudiced against him by opposite interests. They now met with him in the office of Master Eightpenny, who transacted the business of the *porteurs* or sheriffs of London ; and lamenting the unsuitableness of his occupation, they offered to introduce him to the primate. At first he declined their kindness, either from a reluctance to owe his advancement to any one's

¹ Grim calls him "Ostom Octonumme ;" Garnier, "Ostom wit (huit) deniers."

favour, or from a preference for the pursuits of a civilian's life.¹ But their urgency overcoming his hesitation, he accompanied them to the archiepiscopal manor of Harrow, and was introduced to the primate as a young man "worthy of his patronage" (A.D. 1142).

Theobald immediately appointed him to a place in his court, where his duties were of a secular character ; but, that he might be provided with a sufficient income, he caused him to receive the minor orders of the Church.

Thus was the first step taken in a career which was to attain so splendid a climax of power and prosperity, and yet to terminate so fatally. But only a powerful mind and a determined will could have carried Becket from the humble position of an archbishop's attendant to the archiepiscopal throne of Canterbury ; could have made Theobald's protegee Theobald's successor. In life the opportunity comes to every one, but it is Genius alone that knows how to wrest fortune from it.

At Theobald's court Becket speedily became a noteworthy person ; his wit, his ardour, his skill in chivalrous exercises, ingratiated him with the young ; his promptitude of thought and fertility of resource secured him the respect and confidence of the old. He was admired by his equals for his personal graces and courtly manners ; his generosity and affable demeanour endeared him to his inferiors. Weaker minds submitted to his energy, decision, and self-reliance ; stronger minds, if they found him deficient in originality, recognised his brilliant talents, his firm will, and his ready invention. And by all it was felt, and openly predicted,—by his enemies as well as his friends, for Becket had enemies,—that this young man was destined to achieve greatness.²

¹ It is evident Becket had no inclination for the Church, or, on his return to London, he would have immediately obtained ordination.

² Roger of Pontigny.

Becket, we have said, had enemies, the chief of whom was Roger Pont l'Evêque, afterwards successively Archdeacon of Canterbury and Archbishop of York, who, regarding this formidable rival in the primate's favour with great jealousy, nicknamed him "the buille-tache clerk,"¹ and by his intrigues twice procured his dismissal from the archiepiscopal court.² But he had as strong a friend in Walter, the Archbishop's brother, and the Archbishop himself was not long in discovering his energy and capacity. He was therefore appointed a member of the Archbishop's council, and employed in many of those subtle and difficult negotiations rendered necessary by the disturbed state of affairs in the latter part of King Stephen's reign.

Once convinced of his vigour and fidelity, Theobald distinguished his young councillor with especial favour. He furnished him with the means of completing his legal education under the celebrated Gratian, at Bologna, where he remained a twelve-month ; and afterwards at Auxerre, then a celebrated school of the canon and civil law. He dispatched him to Rome to obtain the revocation of the Legate's commission which had been bestowed on his powerful adversary, Henry of Blois, Bishop of Winchester, and brother of King Stephen.³ Here he won the favour of the Pope and his cardinals ; and his success in recovering for the see of Canterbury the legantine power which was properly its privilege was so grateful to Theobald that he rewarded him, on his return to England, with the livings of St

¹ That is, "clerk with the hatchet ;" so named from the lay member of the household in whose company Becket had first appeared at Harrow.

² Alluding to this nickname, Grim remarks, that "in good sooth Thomas did, at a later period, and at a suitable opportunity, take the axe in hand, or rather the sword of St Peter himself, and hew away Roger and his accomplices from the communion of the faithful."

³ Great chronological difficulties present themselves in reference to this mission of Becket to Rome ; but the narrative in the text agrees with the conclusions of Dean Milman in his "History of Latin Christianity."

Mary-le-Strand and Orford in Kent, and with prebends in the cathedrals of London and Lincoln. In process of time, says Fitz-Stephen, the Archbishop ordained him deacon ; and when his old enemy, Roger de l'Evêque, was promoted to the archbishopric of York, he received the vacant archdeaconry of Canterbury,—“the highest ecclesiastical dignity in the kingdom, next to the bishops and abbots ; it brought him in annually one hundred marks.”

A second delicate mission to the court of Rome was placed in his hands. Stephen had concluded with Henry of Anjou a solemn treaty, by which the latter, on Stephen's death, would succeed to the crown ; but an intrigue was concerted to secure the coronation of Eustace, the son of Stephen, during his father's lifetime. Theobald thereupon dispatched Archdeacon Becket to obtain from Pope Eugenius a bull prohibiting the English bishops from officiating at the projected coronation. The task was a difficult one, for the papal court was favourable to Stephen's designs, and apprehensive of the hostile spirit the young Plantagenet had already displayed towards the pretensions of Rome. One of the cardinals observed that it would be easier to hold a ram by the horns than a lion by the tail ; but Becket's wonderful address, his charm of manner, and his diplomatic skill, proved successful, and on the death of Stephen, Henry was proclaimed king (A.D. 1154).

So great a service would necessarily recommend him to the favour of the new sovereign ; and on Henry's arrival in England, Becket was summoned to the royal court. He appeared under the patronage of the Archbishop, and strongly recommended¹ as a valuable and energetic servant. His appearance and acquirements could not fail to strengthen the impression produced by his services and character. Tall of stature, with

¹ Theobald's recommendation was supported by the Bishop of Winchester ; Philip, Bishop of Bayeux ; and Arnulf, of Lisieux.

a well-knit frame and a handsome countenance, skilled in all knightly exercises, remarkable for the fascination of his manners, his voice sweet and persuasive, his conversation brilliant, varied, and full of fire, there was probably no knight or courtier in Henry's household who could enter into rivalry with him. Both by nature, education, and experience, as a scholar, a lawyer, a knight, a diplomatist, as a man who had seen "many cities and men," he was fitted to discharge with dignity and ability the highest offices to which the favour of the King could raise him.

And he sprang into power at a single leap. Henry was a good judge of men, and saw in Becket the counsellor and adviser he needed. He therefore appointed him his Chancellor in 1153;¹ in other words, he became the King's private secretary, confessor, chaplain, prime minister, and keeper of his conscience.² He also received the deanery of Hastings, the wardenship of the Tower of London, the custody of the castle of Berkhamstead, and the honour of Eye, with the service of one hundred knights.

So long as he continued Chancellor,³ the office of Grand Justiciary does not seem to have been filled up, and in a civil sense he had no superior but the King. His elevation seems to have been favourably regarded by the multitude, with whom his affable manners and handsome person would make him popular; but we have no reason to believe that any national

¹ Roger of Wendover.

² "The dignity of the Chancellor makes him the second person in the kingdom after the King: he keeps the royal seal, and uses one side of it to seal his own ordinances; the King's chapel is under his care and superintendence; he attends all the royal councils, even without being summoned; and nothing is done without his advice; so that if, by God's mercy, his own merits should not be wanting, the King's Chancellor always dies an archbishop, or bishop, if he pleases."—*Fitz-Stephen*.

³ Lord Campbell's "Lives of the Lord Chancellors," i. 14.

feeling was excited by it. We may imagine, says a modern writer, the joy of the Saxon race in witnessing his promotion. But Becket was not a Saxon ; his father and mother were both aliens, and in language, accomplishments, and tastes he was certainly not an Englishman. The popular sympathy was with him because he had risen from a comparatively modest position ; because he was successful ; because he ever displayed a keen consideration for the poor ; because he was haughty towards his superiors, but courteous in all his relations with those beneath him.

He speedily gained the entire confidence of his young sovereign,¹—a man of strong affections, warm feelings, liberal views, and clear intellect,—who found in him a bold and sagacious minister, capable of conceiving and carrying out a resolute policy, and at the same time a lively companion, partial to hunting and hawking, a good judge of wine, and always ready in the promotion of innocent pleasure ; for it is proper to observe that Becket's moral character is free from stain, and that, in an age of vicious indulgence, he remembered that his body was made in the image of the Divine.

It has been justly said that the sovereign was worthy of his minister, and the minister of his sovereign ; and assuredly never did minister serve king more loyally and energetically than Becket served Henry. It was his nature to throw himself heart and soul into whatever he undertook. Genius is patient, and often slow, but the highest talent, like Becket's, is nearly always accompanied by an impetuous enthusiasm, and a tendency to elevate a cause or party into an idol.

¹ Fitz-Stephen.



CHAPTER III.

BECKET AS A STATESMAN.

“ The poor and the oppressed found ready access to him ; the cause of the widow never came before him in vain ; he gave justice to the weak, and protected the needy.”—EDWARD GRIM.

HALCYON days followed upon Becket's elevation to the chancellorship, and king and minister, working loyally together, soon healed the wounds with which the country bled, and renewed the shattered organisation of the kingdom.

The Flemish mercenaries, who had lived on the sustenance of the people, were immediately dismissed ; the more turbulent barons were restrained with a strong hand, and most of the castles and fortresses erected during Stephen's disturbed reign were destroyed ; the crown regained the prerogatives that had fallen into abeyance or been disputed ; estates were restored to their lawful owners ; outlaws and robbers were promptly arrested and swiftly punished ; and England seemed to enjoy a second spring. The Church was restored to the affections and reverence of the people ; vacant bishoprics or abbacies were bestowed on deserving persons without simony ; the King, by the favour of Him who is King of kings, succeeded in all he undertook ; the realm increased in wealth, and copious blessings flowed from the horn of plenty. The hills were

cultivated, the valleys waxed glad with corn, the fields teemed with cattle, and the folds with sheep.¹

Meantime, the confidence and attachment between the royal master and his able servant augmented daily. "They played together like boys," says one of the chroniclers; and another, "There never were two better friends in all Christendom." Sometimes Henry rode on horseback into the hall where the Chancellor sat at table, with an arrow in his hand, as on his return from hunting, or on his way to the forest; then he would drink a cup of wine, and having seen the Chancellor, would take his departure; or he would leap over the table, and sit down and eat with him.

Once on a time Becket lay seriously ill at St Gervais, Rouen, and Henry, accompanied by the King of France, frequently visited him. At length he showed symptoms of amendment, and regaining his strength, he sat up one day to play a game of chess, wearing a falconer's cape, with long sleeves to it. Aschetinus, the Prior of Leicester, came in to see him on his way from the court of Henry, who was then in Gascony. Having saluted the Chancellor with the bluntness of a familiar friend, he exclaimed, "How comes it that you make use of a cape with sleeves? That dress is better adapted for those who carry hawks than for ecclesiastics; and though only one person, yet you have to support the dignity of several, being Archdeacon of Canterbury, Dean of Hastings, Prior of Beverley, Canon of this place, and Canon of that, Proctor to the Archbishopric; and more, if rumour is to be credited, likely to become Archbishop yourself."

"I know," replied Becket, "three poor priests in England, either of whom I would rather see advanced to the primacy than I; for were I by any chance elevated to that high dignity, so well do I know my lord the King, that I am assured I

¹ Fitz-Stephen, *apud* Giles.

should be obliged either to lose his favour, or, which God forbid ! to set aside my duty to my God in order to win his pleasure."¹

Ambassadors from the King of Norway coming into England, the Chancellor, as soon as he heard of it, despatched messengers to meet them, and accompany them to the royal court, defraying all their charges out of his own purse.

The King of England, when he crossed the sea to his French dominions, used his own ship. Becket, with the splendid liberality which was so marked a feature of his character, caused three new ships to be built and fully equipped, and then presented them to his sovereign.

Nicholas, Archdeacon of London, incurred the King's displeasure from some unrecorded cause, and, with his family, was therefore expelled from his residence, which was locked up by the King's orders, and announced to be sold by auction. But the good Chancellor never rested until he had reconciled the Archdeacon to King Henry, and procured the restoration of his property.

We owe to Becket's secretary a lively picture of his conduct and habits as Chancellor. It has frequently been quoted, and, indeed, cannot be omitted from any life of this remarkable man, it throws so vivid a light on his real character. Had Becket the Statesman never become Becket the Archbishop, his fame might have been less extensive, for he would neither have suffered "martyrdom" nor received "canonisation," but his name would have brightly shone on the pages of history as that of England's purest, best beloved, and most sagacious minister.

"Chancellor Thomas," says Fitz-Stephen, "caused the palace of London, which is the seat of the monarchy, and had fallen into decay, to be thoroughly restored; and proceeded

¹ Fitz-Stephen.

with such wonderful celerity, that this great work was completed between Easter and Whitsuntide. Such were the numbers of the carpenters and other workmen labouring together, and so great the din they made in their haste to complete their work, that even those who stood close together could hardly hear one another speak.

“The popularity of the Chancellor among clergy, and soldiers, and civilians, was excessive. He might have obtained all the parish churches that were vacant, both in the towns and castles, for no man would deny him if he only asked; but he showed his magnanimity by repressing all selfish desires, and by disdaining to deprive poor priests or clerks of the opportunity of gaining those churches for themselves. His great mind aimed rather at great objects, such as the priorship of Beverley, the prebends of Hastings, the Tower of London, with the service of the soldiers belonging to it, the custody of Eye, with its honour of two hundred and forty soldiers, and the castle of Berkhamstead.

“He generally amused in a desultory manner, and not after a set purpose, with either hawks and falcons, or dogs of the chase, or the game of chess,—

‘Where front to front the mimic warriors close,
To check the progress of their mimic foes.’

“The Chancellor’s house and table were open to all of every degree who came to court and needed hospitality, whether they were in reality, or only in appearance, men of good repute. He seldom sat down to dinner without the company of earls and barons whom he had invited. He ordered the rooms in which he entertained his guests to be strewn daily during winter with clean hay and straw, and in summer with fresh green boughs and rushes, that the numerous knights, for whom no place could be found at the tables, might find the floor clean

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for their reception, and not soil their costly attire. His board was splendidly adorned with gold and silver vessels, and supplied with rich dishes and costly wines, so that whatever articles of consumption, either for food or drink, were recommended by their rarity, his agents purchased without being deterred by their price.

“ But amidst all this pomp he himself was singularly frugal, so that his rich table provided rich alms for those who partook of the fragments : and I have heard from his confessor, Robert, the venerable canon of Merton, that from the time he became Chancellor, he never gave way to licentious practices. Yet was this a subject on which the King continually tempted him day and night ; but, as a man of prudence, and ordained of God, he was ever abstinent in the flesh, and had his loins girded up about him. As a wise man, he was bent on administering the affairs of the kingdom ; and while occupied with so many matters, both public and private, he yielded not to such temptations. For, as the poet says :

‘ The ever active man must lack the time
To shoot shafts from the bow of strong desire.’

“ Truly a chaste man was the Chancellor,—an enemy to vice and uncleanness,—so that when a clerk of his, Richard of Ambly, had carried off the wife of a friend, who had been long absent beyond the sea, and had persuaded her that her husband was dead, he removed him from his house and intimacy, and ordered him to be thrown into the Tower of London, where he was kept for some time, loaded with irons.

“ The chief nobles of England and the neighbouring kingdoms sent their sons to act as servants to the Chancellor. When they had received very handsome entertainment and a liberal education, he bestowed on them the belt of knighthood, and sent them home in honour to their parents and

kinsmen, retaining a few near his own person. The King himself, his master, committed his son and heir to his charge ; and the Chancellor maintained the young prince in the midst of many sons of the nobility of the same age, and provided him with tutors and attendants as his rank required.

“ But amid all this accumulation of worldly honours, the Chancellor frequently bared his back in private to the scourge, and received the lash of discipline from Ralph, Prior of the Holy Trinity, when in the neighbourhood of London, and at Canterbury from Thomas, a priest of St Martin’s. He was humble to the humble, but to the proud he was stern and haughty, as if it were his natural bias—

‘ To spare the prostrate, but to quell the proud.’¹

“ Many nobles and knights did homage to the Chancellor, which he readily received, always with a reservation of their allegiance to the King, and he then maintained and promoted them as their patron.

“ Sometimes, when he was going beyond sea, he had six, or even more, vessels in his train ; and all who wished to cross he carried over at his own expense. When he landed, he rewarded the master of his ship and the sailors to their full contentment. Scarcely a day passed in which he did not make bountiful presents of horses, hawks, apparel, gold and silver, furniture, or money. Thus did he exemplify the sacred proverb : Some are lavish of their own, yet always abound ; some are covetous of what belongs to others, and are always in want,—

‘ And their scant substance lacks increase.’

So gracefully did the Chancellor confer his gifts, that he was counted the charm and delight of the whole Latin world.”

By his eminent virtues, by his greatness of mind, and the

¹ “ *Parcere subjectis debellare superbos.*”

good deeds which seemed to spring spontaneously from his heart, the Chancellor was held in high esteem with the King, the clergy, the soldiers, and the people. When the day's business was done, the King and he were wont to play together, like boys of the same age,¹ in the hall, the church, and while they were sitting or riding together. Once, when riding through a street in London, when all things were thrown out of their usual course by the severity of the winter, the King saw at some distance an old man coming towards him, very poor, and dressed in a thin and ragged coat.

"Do you see yonder old man?" said he to the Chancellor.

The Chancellor answered, "Yes."

"How poor and infirm he is!" said the King; "and he is almost naked. Would it not be a charity to give him a stout warm cloak?"

"Truly, it would be a great charity; and you, as King, ought to keep such matters in your eye."

Presently the poor man came up, and the King and the Chancellor stopped. The King accosted him in a mild tone, and asked if he would like to have a good cloak. The beggar, ignorant of who they were, thought they were jesting with him.

Said the King to the Chancellor:—"Yours shall be the grace of doing this great act of charity."

And so saying, he laid hands upon a very fine new cloak of scarlet and ermine which the Chancellor wore, and endeavoured to pull it off, while the latter struggled to retain it. A great tumult arose, and the nobles and knights in their train hastened up in astonishment to discover what sudden cause of contest had sprung up between them, but nobody could tell; each had his hands fully occupied, and more than once seemed

¹ As Becket was eleven years older than the King, we suspect the boyish play was chiefly on one side.

on the point of coming to the ground. After a certain resistance, the Chancellor gave way to the King, who pulled off his cloak and gave it to the beggar. Then he told the story to his attendants, who were all convulsed with laughter, but eagerly offered their cloaks and capes to the Chancellor. Meantime, the poor old man walked off with his unexpected prize of a rich furred cloak, rejoicing, and giving thanks to God.¹

Such might be the diversions of his leisure time, but we have abundant evidence that Becket neglected none of the important duties of his high position. And if he indulged in a considerable amount of ostentation and splendour, we may well believe that he was actuated by politic motives; that it was his object to render the King's court attractive to the nobility, and to secure their regular attendance at the *Aula Regis*. He was not only the King's servant, but the King's representative; and the large income which he derived from his ecclesiastical preferments he expended in the maintenance of his master's dignity. His revenue as Chancellor could not have supplied him with the means of hospitality, for he received only five shillings a day (equal, perhaps, to three pounds of our present money), a sominel, two seasoned sominels, one sextary of clear wine, one sextary of household wine, one large wax candle, and forty pieces of common candle.²

He administered justice with a firm and even hand, showing no favour to the rich, and in no wise oppressing the poor. By his unshaken impartiality he contributed greatly to that rapid fusion of English and Norman which was almost completed in Henry II.'s reign. We find him travelling over the country holding courts of justice in various counties. He has been styled, and with much reason, the founder of the Court of Chancery, for he was the first Chancellor who sat in public hearing and deciding causes. It is noticeable that in this

¹ Fitz-Stephen.

² Madox's "History of the Exchequer," p. 195.

capacity he displayed a strong disposition to humiliate ecclesiastical pretensions, so that Bishop Tobit publicly accused him of thrusting a sword into the bosom of the Church, his mother; and Archbishop Theobald, his whilom friend and patron, menaced him with excommunication. When some prelates in his hearing spoke loudly of their independence of the royal authority, he reminded them, in a severe tone, that they were bound to the King by the same oath of allegiance as knight or noble, "to be true and faithful to the King, and truth and faith to bear of life and limb and earthly honour."

The prelates and abbots had excused themselves in the French war (see *post*) from rendering service in the field, on the reasonable plea that they were forbidden to shed blood by Holy Church; but they had also refused to pay the tax of *scutage* (or £3 upon each knight's fee) which had been substituted for personal service. Becket quickly compelled them to discharge their arrears.

Dean Hook explains this seeming anomaly in the career of the man who was afterwards so keen an advocate of the claims of the Church.¹ He observes, that though in later life Becket's views were altered, the alteration sprang from no inconsistency in his character; but whatever principles he adopted, or whoever was the master he served, he was always the same thorough-going enthusiast. As he had been the most devoted servant of Theobald, so he was the most zealous counsellor of Henry, and so he became the most ardent advocate and defender of the Church. As Thomas the Chancellor, he upheld the claims of the State; as Thomas the Archbishop, he defied the State with unquailing courage. In our own time we have seen a great minister possessed with the same power of identifying himself with the particular cause or measure he has temporarily espoused, and we have seen him charged with inconsistency by

¹ Dean Hook's "Archbishops of Canterbury," ii. 374.

superficial reasoners. And it may be observed, that this expansive enthusiasm is frequently the characteristic of men of the highest order of talent. Genius soars above all impulsive movements into an atmosphere of almost divine calm and order: talent is affected and controlled by them.

An example of Becket's steady assertion of the royal prerogative will not be out of place.¹

Hilary, Bishop of Chichester, claimed episcopal jurisdiction over the Abbey of Battle, in Sussex, and its dependencies. The Abbot, Walter, pleaded in opposition the exemption granted by the founder, William the Conqueror. At length the case came before the King and Chancellor, assembled in council with the great barons in the *Aula Regis*, or royal court, at Colchester, in 1157.

During the proceedings Bishop Hilary took occasion to remark that "it was not lawful for a layman—no, not even for the King himself—to confer ecclesiastical liberties and dignities upon churches, nor to take them away where once they had been conferred, except with the permission or confirmation of the Pope."

No English king ever listened in patience to such a defiance of the royal prerogative; and Henry exclaimed, with a terrible oath—"You think by your craft and subtlety to overthrow those royal prerogatives with which God has been pleased to invest me; but, on your oath of fealty, I charge you to submit to correction for your presumptuous speech against my royal crown and dignity; and I charge the prelates here present to do me justice upon you, agreeably to the rights of the crown placed upon my head by the Most High God. Is it not plain that you are acting in direct opposition to my regal dignities, that you are seeking to deprive me of my ancient privileges?"

The excitement in court was great, and the Chancellor

¹ Quoted by Dean Hook, from the "*Chronicon Monasterii de Bello*."

solemnly warned the Bishop that he had violated his oath of allegiance, calling upon him to be "more cautious in his speech."

The King would not hear the Abbot in reply, "for," said he, "it is not for your prudence henceforth to advocate your claim. It is for me, in defence of my own prerogative. The decision of the matter is my concern."

An adjournment took place for a few minutes. When the court re-assembled, Becket, in a long and able speech, gave judgment in favour of the Abbot; who, he said, sought only to retain the privileges granted to his abbey by William the Conqueror. In these privileges he was now confirmed by the King; "not," said Becket, in conclusion, "for the purpose of setting the Bishop at nought, but for the defence, by sound reason, of royal prerogatives which you, in our hearing, have been pleased to deride as frivolous."

So staunch an advocate of the crown was the future ecclesiastical martyr!

We are now called upon to view this capable and versatile man in a new character. In 1159 Henry formed the project of strengthening his throne and adding splendour to his dynasty by contracting his infant heir, Becket's pupil, to the daughter, then three months old, of Louis of France. Such an alliance could hardly fail to be of advantage to both nations. But as it promised to increase the power of France, it was secretly opposed by the Emperor of Germany. In these circumstances, Henry deemed it advisable to despatch Becket, his *alter ego*, to the French court, that he might counteract the imperial intrigues, and bring the negotiation to a successful conclusion. And if the result was not what King and Chancellor wished, it is no discredit to the latter's diplomatic skill. Becket obtained so great an influence over the French King and nobility, that, as Froude remarks, notwithstanding the

losses he afterwards occasioned them in the field, and the concessions he extorted from them by negotiation, he was received in France with open arms, and provided with an asylum, principally at the royal expense, during the six years of his proscription.¹

Becket's biographers, however, furnish us with few details of his various negotiations. They seem to have been dazzled by the magnificence which he displayed in his embassy; and Fitz-Stephen describes it with bated breath, as if wholly overcome. The splendour was congenial to the æsthetic taste of the man, but it was also politic. Becket was desirous of impressing the French with a vivid idea of English wealth and power, and of exalting the sovereign by the magnificence of the subject. "He prepared," says Fitz-Stephen, "to display the full opulence of English luxury, that, among all persons and in all things, the King might be honoured in his representative, and the representative in himself."

From the lively pages of the old chronicler we take the following description:—

The Chancellor was escorted by two hundred horsemen of his own household; soldiers, clerks, butlers, serving-men, knights, and sons of nobles, who were performing military service to him, and were all equipped with arms. They and all their followers were festively arrayed in new attire, each according to his rank. He likewise took with him four-and-twenty changes of raiment, almost all of which were to be given away, and left in foreign parts,—elegant curtains, frieze, and foreign skins, cloths, and carpets, such as those with which the bed and chamber of a bishop are adorned.

He carried along with him all kinds of dogs and birds, such as are fit for rich men to keep.

In his train went eight *bigæ*, or waggons, each drawn by five

¹ Froude's "Remains," iii. 9.

horses, equal to war-horses in size and strength, well matched, and with uniform harness. Each horse had its appointed groom, who was dressed in a new tunic; and each carriage had its guard and driver. Two of the waggons carried iron-bound casks, filled with beer, made by a decoction of water from the strength of corn,¹ and designed to be given to the French, who admired that kind of liquor, because it was a wholesome drink, bright and clear, of a vinous colour, and agreeable taste.

One waggon was fitted up as the Chancellor's chapel, another as his chamber, and a third as his kitchen. Others were stored with different kinds of meat and drink; some with cushions, bags containing night-clothes, bundles, and luggage.

He had twelve sumpter horses, and eight coffers to carry his gold-plate and silver cups, pitchers, basins, salt-cellar, spoons, knives, and other utensils. There were also coffers and chests to contain the Chancellor's money, enough to pay for his presents and daily expenses; together with his clothes, a few books, and similar articles. One sumpter horse, preceding the others, carried the sacred vessels of the chapel, the books and ornaments of the altar. Each horse was attended by a groom, well trained to his duties. Moreover, each waggon had a large dog attached to it, either above or below, fierce and terrible, and capable apparently of contending with a bear or a lion. And on the back of each sumpter horse rode a long-tailed monkey,—

“An ape, that mimic of the human kind.”

On entering the French towns and villages, the footmen went first, about two hundred and fifty in number, in groups of

¹ The reader will recollect that hops were not introduced into England until the reign of Henry VIII.

six or ten, or more, singing some verses in their own tongue, after the manner of their country. Then, at a little distance, followed the dogs, in couples, and harriers fastened by thongs, with their keepers and whippers-in. Now came the sumpter horses, ridden by their grooms, who sat well back upon their haunches. At all this noise the French would come running out of their houses, inquiring who it was—whose family could this be? And when they were told that it was the Chancellor of the King of England, going on an embassy to their lord, the King of France, they would exclaim, "How wonderful a man must this King of England be, if his Chancellor travels in such state!"

After the sumpter horses came the squires, carrying the shields of the knights, and leading their *destriers*; then other squires and the pages, and the falconers with the birds on their wrists; then the standard-bearer, and the upper and lower servants of the Chancellor's household, and the knights and clerks, riding two and two. Finally came the Chancellor, and about him some of his particular friends.

As soon as Becket landed in France, he sent forward a messenger to inform the King of his approach. Louis appointed to meet him at Paris on a certain day. It was the custom of the French sovereigns to provide for all strangers who visited their courts so long as they remained there; and Louis, desirous of showing the Chancellor a splendid hospitality, prohibited the Parisian vendors from selling anything either to him or his agents. But when Becket heard of this royal precaution, he determined, with the proud independence so characteristic of the man, to baffle it completely. For this purpose he sent forward his servants in disguise to St Denis, with directions to buy bread, meat, fish, wine, and all eatables in abundance; and when he entered the Hotel du Temple, which had been set apart for his residence in Paris, they informed him

it was supplied with stores for three days, at the rate of one thousand men a day.¹

During his residence in Paris he spared no expense to win the favour of the populace. He gave away all his gold and silver plate, all his changes of rich and costly raiment: to one person he gave a robe; to another, a furred cloak; to a third, a pelisse; to this man a palfrey, and to that a war-horse. He was equally liberal towards the learned men of France; and the French King, on his part, showed himself indisposed to be outshone in the courteous strife. We may not wonder, therefore, that the best feeling soon existed between the two parties, and that Becket succeeded in accomplishing the object of his mission. The treaty which he concluded provided that Margaret, the infant princess, should be placed under the charge of a Norman noble until her education was completed; and that her dower, a large estate in the Vexin, should be held by the Knights-Templar as a pledge for the due performance of the contract.

When Becket returned to England, he laboured hard to preserve peace; but the drift of affairs was beyond his control; and, notwithstanding the projected alliance, war with France became inevitable. Henry, in right of his wife, Eleanor, claimed the Earldom of Toulouse, which was attached to the Duchy of Aquitaine. Louis, as his feudal superior, declared that its disposal rested with him; and he may reasonably have been apprehensive of allowing his powerful rival to obtain any further acquisitions on the Continent. When the Earl of Toulouse appealed to him for succour, he therefore readily granted it; and hence the struggle between Henry and the Earl developed into a war between England and France.

The King of England found no difficulty in engaging the

¹ Fitz-Stephen.

martial barons of England and his military tenants to assist him in this war. Nor does it seem, as Lord Lyttelton remarks,¹ that the policy of those times ever regarded his dominions upon the French continent as prejudicial to English interests. The maritime provinces appeared very profitable to the English, on account of their trade, and especially Normandy and Brittany, which, lying opposite to their coasts, secured them the command of the "narrow seas." And this advantage arose from all Henry's French territories, that while a large portion of the kingdom was under his rule, France had much more to fear from England than England from France.

Accompanied by his Chancellor, by Malcolm, King of Scotland, and Raymond, King of Arragon,—to whose daughter the King's son, Richard, had been affianced,—by many vassal princes, and all his most powerful barons, Henry invaded France at the head of a well-equipped army, including seven hundred knights enlisted at Becket's personal charge. But before he arrived at Toulouse, Louis flung himself into that city with only a few soldiers, regardless of the danger to which his rashness exposed his own person, and, through him, the whole kingdom. The temerity, however, was more apparent than real. Louis was Henry's superior so far as his French territories were concerned; and he may well have calculated that Henry would shrink from setting his vassals so bad an example as to make open war against his lord. This, indeed, was the objection advanced by his council when Becket, ever looking at the end, and quite regardless of the means, urged him to an immediate attack upon Toulouse, which, being weak and ill-garrisoned, might easily be taken, and, with it, a more important and glorious prize—the person of Louis himself. The French King, he argued, had laid down the character of Henry's liege lord, when, in defiance of the conventions be-

¹ Lyttelton's "History of the Life of King Henry II.," ii. 91, 94.

tween them, he had deliberately put himself as an enemy on equal terms with his opponent.

But the scruple to which we have adverted, and various political considerations, induced the King, warier and more cautious than his impetuous minister, to retire from before Toulouse. The remainder of the Earl's dominions, however, he felt himself at liberty to vex with fire and sword. He subdued many castles and strong places, and having strengthened and repaired the fortifications of Cahors, to cover his conquests in Languedoc, he committed it to Becket's custody, and then, with the bulk of his army, withdrew into Normandy.

The Chancellor, thus left to himself, acted with his wonted vigour, and showed himself a true member of the Church militant. At this time he had under his command not only the seven hundred knights already spoken of, but twelve hundred cavalry, whom he had taken into his pay, and four thousand infantry, for a period of forty days. Each trooper received three shillings per diem, to provide horses and attendants, and the knights themselves all dined at the Chancellor's table. And these knights were always foremost in the whole English army, doing more valiant deeds than any others, and everywhere distinguishing themselves; for Becket himself was always at their head, encouraging them, and pointing out the path to glory. It was he who gave them the signal to advance or retire; and one day, though a clerk, he charged, with lance in rest and horse at full speed, a valiant chevalier, Engebranc de Trie, who was advancing towards him, and hurling him from his saddle, carried off his horse in triumph.¹

Peace was at length restored (1161); Becket's treaty was fully ratified; and covered with glory he returned to England. Of the power he enjoyed at this period, and of the general estimation in which he was held, we possess abundant contem-

¹ Fitz-Stephen.

porary evidence. When Henry placed his son in his hands, it was Becket whom he employed to obtain an oath of fealty towards the young prince from all the nobles of the realm.¹ In the prefatory lines to John of Salisbury's "*De Nugis Curiarum*" (published in 1160), he is specially pointed out as *the* man to whom all praise and honour are due:—

"Jure patronatus illum cole, qui velit esse
 Et sciat, et possit, tutor utique tuus,
 Ergo quærat lux cleri, gloria gentis
 Anglorum, Regis dextera forma boni.
 Quæsitus Regni tibi Cancellarius Angli,
 Primus sollicita mente petendus erit.
 Hic est pii Regni leges cancellat iniquas,
 Et mandata pii Principis æqua facit.
 Publica privatis qui præfert commoda semper,
 Quodque dat in plures ducit in aere suo.
 Quod dat habet, quod habet dignis donat vice versa,
 Spargit, sed sparsæ multiplicantur opes,
 Utque virum virtus animi, sic gratia formæ
 Undique mirandum gentibus esse facit."

IMITATED.

[In virtue of patronship, do thou reverence him who has the will, the knowledge, and the power to be in every way thy guardian. Therefore let thy search be for the light of the priesthood, the glory of the English race, the fitting example or model of a good King. Thy selected Chancellor of the kingdom is the first who should be supplicated with eager mind. He it is who sweeps aside the unjust laws of the realm, and puts on an equitable footing the decrees of a pious sovereign. He it is who always prefers the public weal to private advantage, and what he gives for the good of the many, reckons as his own coin. He gives what he has; what he has, *vice versa*, he bestows on worthy men. He scatters freely, but scattered riches multiply. And both his mental gifts and his comely person render him an object of admiration to all people.]

The same John of Salisbury writes to him in reference to

¹ Roger of Pontigny.

the French war:¹—"Those who have returned say—and I would it were true—that the King and court are entirely governed by your counsel, and that peace depends upon your advocacy of it."

And yet that the man was not spoiled by all the success which attended, and all the adulation which bespattered, the great minister, we learn from a charmingly simple epistle addressed to him by Peter of Celles, Abbot of Reney, whose friendship he seems to have sought simply because he was a scholar.²

"To his dear Lord and Friend, Thomas, the Chancellor of the King of England, his brother Peter, servant of the servants of God, himself and all that is his:—

"The man not puffed up by prosperous fortune is admired more for his humility than his success. In you, as I have heard from those who have seen you, glory struggles with good fortune, and the struggle is one rather of ambition than of strife: defeat brings with it no confusion, and victory no triumph. Each seems in turn victorious, but it is glory and not pride; it is good fortune, but without excess. From this cause it is that, from the height of your exaltation, not being able to come yourself, you have addressed a letter to my insignificance. You ask of me familiarity and friendship, which, if I asked you, and you granted me, would indeed be a cause for admiration, from the unequal rank of the two parties. For what relation can exist between the Abbot of Celles and the Chancellor of the King of England? Who does not know that you are the greatest man of your kingdom, next to the King himself? I will speak briefly, for the more highly I think of you, the more lowly do I think and feel of myself. In no wise, then, will I hold out my hand to accept this friendship; but if you will place me among the crowd of your casual friends, I shall think that your highness has dealt bounteously with me. I do not wish to change the first state of things, for I am anxious to do a greater favour.

"I have not by me Master G——'s sermons, but I am inquiring for them, and will with all speed set the copyist about this work for your use. Farewell."

¹ Epistolæ Johannis Salisbur. lxxvii.

² Dr Giles's "Life and Letters of Thomas à Becket," i. 85.

Prosperous and powerful, and holding an office which afforded scope for the full exercise of his peculiar talents, Becket, we believe, had fully satisfied his ambition. His tastes were not those of an ecclesiastic; when he put on the chancellor, he put off the deacon: and though he must have known that the highest ecclesiastical dignity was in his reach, we think he was honestly unwilling to exchange a secular for a religious life. We do not say he was not religious, or, at all events, conscientious; religious with the religion of a strong and active mind, which found its fitting food in its daily duties, but could not brook the strict discipline of the Church. We know he was pure of life, charitable, no brawler, and a man of generous temper; yet we are of opinion he knew himself to be unfitted for sacred office. We can imagine, therefore, his surprise, when, a year after Archbishop Theobald's death—a year spent in balancing the claims of various candidates—King Henry pressed the primacy upon him (A.D. 1162). At the time, both Henry and Becket were in Normandy at Falaise. The King, sending for him privately, informed him that he was to repair with all haste to England, ostensibly to quiet an outbreak on the Welsh frontier. "But," added the King, "you do not yet know the real reason for your being sent: it is my will that you be made Archbishop." The Chancellor seems to have thought that his master was indulging in a sorry jest. "A pretty saint," he exclaimed, pointing to his gay attire, "you have chosen to figure as the head of the monks of Canterbury!" And, reflecting a moment, he saw at once the dangers that would beset his path if the King were serious in his design. "If you do as you say, my lord," he added, "your mind will be quickly estranged from me, and you will hate me then as much as you love me now; for you take to yourself, and will continue to take to yourself, an authority in church matters to

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which I should not consent, and many persons will there be to stir up strife between us.”¹

Another of his biographers² tells us that the Chancellor, as a man of prudence and foresight, and well acquainted with the duties of an archbishop, plainly saw that he could not accept the office without offending either God or the King ; and, at the last, he would have refused it, but for the influence of Henry of Pisa, the cardinal. As a modern writer observes, he knew Henry, and he knew himself. He knew that the King would expect from a primate of his own nomination a compliance with his wishes which it might be the duty of an archbishop to resist. In whatever position he was placed, Becket felt that he must honestly and zealously act up to its obligations. As he had been the King's loyal servant, so, if necessary, he would be his uncompromising opponent. He knew the King's views on the great question of Church and State, which was then agitating the minds of men ; but, like most of his successors, he regarded the Church as subordinate to the State, and was determined to bring even ecclesiastics under the civil law. He knew that Henry spurned the Archbishop's pretensions to be ecclesiastically the superior of the King, and to exercise separate jurisdiction over his own subjects,—over his priests, deacons, bishops, and all officials who had received the tonsure. He knew that, as formerly in these things he had been the King's servant, so, if he assumed the tiara, he must henceforward be the King's master. “Holy Church,” he said, “is the mother of all, both kings and priests ; and she has two kings, two laws, two jurisdictions, two controlling powers—one over the soul, and one over the body : two swords are hers.”³ It is marvellous that Henry could have expected a strong, able, and resolute man like Becket to become his puppet ; that he could

¹ Herbert of Bosham.

² John of Salisbury.

³ Herbert of Bosham ; cf. Roger of Pontigny and Fitz-Stephen.

have supposed it probable he would prove false to the traditions and duties of the archiepiscopate. But Henry thought his zealous servant would remain as zealous in the abbot's gown as in the Chancellor's robe, and pressed forward his appointment to the see of Canterbury.

Nor was he alone in this opinion. The bishops shared it, and remonstrated, through Gilbert Folier, Bishop of Hereford,¹ against the advancement of so flagrant an enemy of the Church. The monks refused to obey the royal mandate. "It was indecent," they said, "that a man who was rather a soldier than a priest, and who had devoted himself to hunting and hawking instead of the study of the Holy Scriptures, should be seated in the chair of St Augustine!" Others reviled him for his presumption and arrogance: "How could a man who had never ventured to put his hand to the oar now dare to take the helm and assume the command?" Particularly in the Church of Canterbury, where all the convent were of the monastic profession, and every prelate had been a regular follower of the religious order; but now they were to have an archbishop who, in his dress, scarcely resembled a priest, and who delighted in the luxuries of a court.

Meanwhile Becket remained silent, suffering events to take their course. He had done his duty; he had explained himself to the King, and still the King persisted. Now that the primacy was within his grasp, he would have been more than human had he not felt some glow and stir of ambition; the London citizen's son could hardly be insensible to the honour of taking his seat as the equal, nay, the superior of kings; and his ardent imagination, probably, had already begun to shape out a saintly career, which should excite the astonishment of all men, confute the calumnies of his enemies, and redound to his immortal glory and the everlasting good of the Church. As

¹ Afterwards Bishop of London.

when he was made Chancellor he had thrown off the deacon ; so, if he was made Archbishop, he would throw off the secular. His fiery, impetuous nature was aflame already with the hopes, longings, and projects of this new life.

Before the King's will all opposition having faded away, the Council formally appointed him Archbishop of Canterbury. And on Whitsunday he received priest's orders in the cathedral from the hands of Walter of Rochester. Soon afterwards he was formally consecrated by Henry Bishop of Winchester ; and then it was seen that, though bishops and priests had murmured, the common people had joyfully ratified their sovereign's choice. So great was the general delight, no language can describe it ; and the only grave face present at the splendid ceremonial was that of the new primate himself, who thought less of the honour than of the burden he had taken upon him.¹

¹ Roger of Pontigny.





CHAPTER IV.

BECKET AS ARCHBISHOP.

[A.D. 1162.]

"I proceed to describe one who had now become a new man. My soul shrinks from the untried subject, and my weak pen, hitherto sufficient to record the manners of a weak man passing through a world of weakness, now feels its powers exhausted. The dignity and the splendour of the theme strike me aghast, and completely unnerve me. . . But, taught by the grace of Him who created and fashioned mankind, I will change my style as I best am able, and will delineate the heavenly likeness of the heavenly one, even that pontifical form so conspicuous in Christ's pontiff, that the men of this very time, who are now alive, and all those who live in future times, and especially pontiffs, may have an exemplar to imitate and admire; yea, which ought rather to be painted in vermillion than written with a pen."—
HERBERT OF BOSHAM.

THOMAS the Chancellor was now Thomas the Archbishop; and penetrated, as such a man could not fail to be, with the solemnity of his new office, he endeavoured to adapt to it his mode of life. He was not the less an enthusiast because he had assumed the tiara. So he put aside his costly raiment, his falcons, his splendid banquets, and gay companions; he wore sackcloth, he fasted on bread and water, he submitted his back daily to the scourge, he doubled his alms, he washed the feet of beggars. He knew what ideal the age had formed of a saintly prelate, and he

strove to live up to that ideal. In this there was no hypocrisy ; that bold heart and daring intellect were incapable of time-serving or deceit. Nor was the change so dramatic in its suddenness as some writers have ventured to describe it,—as if he went to bed one evening a chancellor and a sinner, and rose the next morning an archbishop and a saint. It was not even so complete as they would have us believe. Though he wore sackcloth, his dress and retinue were still remarkable for their magnificence ; though he himself fared upon bread and water, his table was still spread with fastidious delicacy. He did not become an ascetic all at once ; but, as is the case with most enthusiastic natures, he gradually became more and more absorbed in his new life, and more and more rigid in the performance of its duties. But, as Mr Froude remarks, he still chose his companions for their rank and intellectual accomplishments, his studies for their political and philosophical rather than their religious character ; and the change which took place in his pursuits and manner of living was such as the change of his rank and occupation would necessarily suggest to a refined taste. It has been pointed out that, two years after his consecration, the pious John of Salisbury ventured to remonstrate with his illustrious friend upon his preference of secular literature to psalms and sermons ; and it is obvious that had John of Salisbury believed the Archbishop to be a great saint, such advice would have been both futile and unbecoming ; while, if he had regarded him as a hollow pretender to sanctity, he would certainly have addressed him in a less affectionate and cordial tone.

No ; the truth is that Thomas the Archbishop was identical with Thomas the Chancellor, except that, his position and duties being different, he felt that his outward life must be different ; that hawking and hunting and military sports, however permissible in the servant of the King, were not appro-

pritate to the servant of the Church. The bold, earnest, impulsive nature of the man remained the same; and as he had been faithful in the uttermost to his lord the King, so now he was resolute in his fidelity to his lofty ecclesiastical position. He was no longer the minister of Henry, but his equal; and hence to sagacious minds it must have been very clear that ere long a collision between them must necessarily ensue. For the reader must remember that Henry was utterly incapable of understanding the change, or the causes of the change, which had taken place in his former Chancellor; and that his hard, worldly, politic mind was unable to comprehend why Becket as Archbishop should manifest an independence of the royal will he had never before exhibited.

The picture which Fitz-Stephen paints of the changed life and manner of living of the Primate is well known, and is frequently quoted as a proof of the abruptness with which he was transformed into a saint. But to an impartial reader it must be obvious that the writer is here accumulating in one brilliant whole the various details which he had noticed and gathered up during the period of Becket's archiepiscopate, and that this splendid picture is the result of the impression left upon his mind after the death of his master. It is true that he speaks of the change as sudden, and as the handiwork of the Most High; and doubtless it would seem sudden—though its gradual development occupied two years or more—to those who had seen Becket in all the pomp he loved so well, presiding over his sumptuous banquets, or, clothed in armour, riding at the head of the English chivalry.

Fitz-Stephen's description, as is usual with the writer, is very spirited and graphic.

"The Archbishop," he says, "in his consecration was anointed with the visible unction of the Divine mercy; and putting off the secular man, was clothed in Christ Jesus. He

laid aside the temporal duties of the Chancellor, and devoted himself to a consideration of the best manner in which he might discharge the functions of a good archbishop.

“To this end he kept watch over his mind with all diligence ; his words assumed a serious tone for the edification of his hearers ; his deeds were deeds of piety and mercy ; his thoughts were thoughts of equity and justice. Clothed in the coarsest sackcloth, which reached to his thighs, and was covered with vermin, he mortified his flesh by spare diet, and his general drink was water in which hay had been boiled. He always, however, took the first taste of the wine set upon his table, and then handed it round to those who were his guests ; so, too, he partook of a portion of the meat placed before him, but regaled himself principally upon bread. All things, however, are clean to the clean, and it is not the food but the appetite which we must censure.

“He frequently exposed his bared back to the lash of discipline. Immediately over the sackcloth he wore a monk’s habit, as being abbot of the monks of Canterbury, and above this the dress of a canon, that he might conform to the custom of priests. But the stole, that delightful yoke which binds us to Christ, was ever, day and night, around his neck.

‘Outwardly his countenance was like that of the many, but in his inward soul he was ever different. In this respect, he chose for his pattern St Sebastian and St Cecilia ; the former of whom, beneath the cover of a soldier’s cloak, carried the spirit of a warrior of Christ ; while the latter was externally adorned in gold-embroidered vestments, though mortifying her flesh with sackcloth. In his table and in his dress he sought to be truly rather than seemingly religious. Fervent in prayer, he attempted to reconcile, and in a manner to unite, his created spirit with the great Spirit, his Creator. As interpreting between God and man, he in his prayers commended man to God,

while in his sermons he commended God to man. He was zealous in reading the Scriptures, and engaged a competent person to instruct him in their holy pages. After dinner he often conferred with his priests, hearing their discussions, and putting questions to them. His companions were religious men : he chose his clerks for their virtue and learning. In the same way he carefully selected his household, by whom all good men were hospitably entertained and respectfully entertained. In almsgiving he was most munificent, for he often sent four or five marks, and sometimes meat and provisions, to the hospitals and poor colleges.

“ His predecessor, Theobald, of sainted memory, had doubled the regular alms given by the former occupants of the primacy ; and now Thomas, in a spirit of pious rivalry, doubled all Theobald’s donations.

“ In order to carry out this holy purpose, he put aside the tenth part of all he received, from whatever source it came. In his secret cell, kneeling on his knees, he daily washed the feet of thirteen beggars,¹ in memory of Christ. Then he entertained them with refreshments until they were satisfied, and bestowed four shillings upon each one of them. If he were occasionally prevented from discharging this duty in his own person, he took care that it should be done by deputy. In his lonely hours, it was marvellous how copiously he gave way to tears ; and when he ministered at the altar, you would be led to imagine that he had our Lord’s Passion before him bodily in the flesh. He handled the Holy Sacraments with awe and reverence, so that his very manner helped to strengthen the spectators in their faith and conduct.

“ More, he received into his house the wanderer and the pauper ; he provided many with clothes to endure the severities

¹ This was a regular duty on the part of the archbishops, and not a peculiar instance of Becket’s piety.

of winter. At Canterbury he was accustomed to take his seat in the cloisters, like one of the monks, studying some useful work ; afterwards he visited the sick, to learn their wishes, that he might see to their fulfilment. He was the husband of the widow, the father of the orphan, the comforter of the oppressed. But though to the meek he was courteous and humble, he treated the haughty with cold severity. Against the insolence and injustice of the powerful, he was lifted up like a strong tower looking towards Damascus ; nor did he attend to the missives or requests of the King, or any other personage, in favour of a courtier or friend, if the latter were not worthy of advancement.

“ Even when Chancellor his morals had been pure, but now the purity of his life was perfect. He was a second Moses, often entering and going out from the Lord’s tabernacle ; entering it at the accepted time for communion with his God, and going out from it in order to perform some charitable and holy act towards his neighbour. He was a second Jacob ; at one time visiting the more prolific Leah, at another the more lovely Rachel. He might be compared to one of God’s angels on Jacob’s ladder ; for now he descended to relieve the wants of man, now he ascended to behold the Divine majesty and the splendour of Jesus. Holding himself apart from the transitory pleasures of this world, he fixed his ardent gaze on the things which are above. His mind was sedulously directed to the practice of those virtues which render happy our life on earth, and win for us the blessing of the life hereafter. His main counsellor was Reason, which ever controlled his passions and mental impulses, as a mistress rules her household. And by Reason he was led to Virtue, which, wrapped up in itself, scorns everything opposed to its sacred nature, and deriving its origin from itself, again returns to itself, and including all things within itself, never seeks any addition from the outer world.

"Virtue was his under four forms. As under that of Prudence, which taught him discernment in the observation of things, in the estimate of persons, time, and place, in the avoidance of evil and the choice of good. Under that of Justice, by whose aid he endeavoured to preserve to God and his neighbour that which belonged to him. Under that of Fortitude, which shows itself in the hour of trial, and defends the mind equally from the sting of present ills and the fear of future ills. And under that of Temperance, which restrained all tendency to extravagant indulgence in prosperity, and recalled him from all luxury and yearning after worldly joys, as well as from exuberant mirth.

"These four virtues are the true four-horse car of Aminadab, the chief and foremost of Diatessarons, the real and genuine harmony of human life. They blend in that sweet and delectable concert among men which fills the Divine ear, and leads us to that happy existence where, separate from every evil, we shall enjoy the accumulation of all good.

"And such was the condition of the Archbishop, and in this condition he was supremely blessed.

"In all his actions he studied stedfastness, greatness, decorum, gravity ; he essayed to refer all things to the test of Prudence ; to govern himself ; to listen to the voice of Wisdom, and not the *vox populi* ; to dread the snares of fortune ; to appear stoutly armed and impregnable against adversity ; to believe that he was not born for his own selfish happiness, but for all who sought and needed his succour, and especially for his Church, whose government lay upon his shoulders ; to devote himself, even while on earth, to the contemplation of things divine ; to follow the example of Jesus Christ, who came down from heaven, and was made man, in order to suffer ; to love Him, and to obey His commands ; and to seek the salvation of himself and of the souls committed to his charge. Thus it came

to pass that Thomas obtained grace in God's sight, and true glory among men; that all the good bore testimony in his praise, and passed an unbought judgment on his worth. This is that which responds to virtue as the echo to the voice, as the image to the model. Fame is the companion of men of holy lives; and as it is not to be sought, so it is not to be spurned, but to be attributed to God. The Apostle says, 'For if I shall wish to glory, I shall be foolish; but I will speak the truth.' Thomas feared this exultation, and rejected it, lest pride should creep in; seeing that it is written, 'However just thou art, yet canst thou never be secure.' There is also another vain and deceitful form of glory, which is sought by the proud and arrogant, the wealthy and the hypocrites—a deceitful similitude of true fame, but with no recommendation such as springs from true virtue. To the eye, indeed, there appears a resemblance, but it is not so in reality. As the good fear the approach of true glory, so do the wicked seek after that which is spurious; or, if they do a laudable action, by endeavouring to wrest it to their renown or profit, they lose both the merit and the name."

It is in these evidently sincere terms of praise Fitz-Stephen commemorates his great master,—terms of praise and affection, which prove that while he revered the primate, he loved the man.¹

¹ We may close what we have to say on the vexed question of Becket's sudden conversion by a quotation from Mr Froude, which seems to us as convincing as it is moderate: "It is obvious that on so sudden a change of station, a person of nice perceptions would, without any intention to affect a change of character, still perceive the propriety of changing many circumstances in his manner of living. Mere good taste, unaccompanied with any more serious feeling, would at once point out to him the unsuitableness of a chancellor's establishment to an archbishop's office; and a degree of seriousness, even short of what he had already evinced, might, on a crisis of such importance, prompt the reformation of other levities. If Thomas Becket,

Becket's warning to the King of the result that would follow his advancement to the archiepiscopate soon fulfilled itself.¹ He immediately announced his resignation of the office of chancellor, an office which Henry had intended him to hold in conjunction with the primacy, that he might carry out the more effectively the royal policy both in Church and State. Dean Hook denounces Becket's conduct in this matter as "heartless in the extreme." But why? The duties of chancellor were obviously incompatible with those of primate; the head of the Church could not also be its assailant; and Becket only acted as every honest man must have acted. He probably wished it to be regarded by Henry as an intimation that he was no longer the royal servant; and that in this light it was accepted by the King we may infer from his outburst of temper. He inquired why did not the Archbishop also resign his archdeaconry? But the answer was obvious; the functions of an archdeacon were of an ecclesiastical character. The act was a conscientious one, and such as might have been anticipated from a man so enthusiastic and impulsive as Becket. We may admit, however, that it was impolitic, inasmuch as it provided his enemies with a plausible basis for their insinuations.

on his sudden promotion from a mere secular office to the highest post in the English Church, had not entirely changed his external demeanour, he must have been a person of worse taste than there is reason to think of him; and if he had remained the same person internally, of worse feeling. And looking at the external change which actually did take place in his conduct, and the internal change which seems indicated by his professions, neither appear greater in degree, nor in any way different from what his previous character would have led us to expect. In short, under each set of circumstances, he exhibits to us the same man."—*Froude's "Remains."*

¹ His first act had been to appoint the day of his consecration, the octave of Whitsunday, as a festival in the Anglican Church in honour of the Holy and Undivided Trinity; and from that time to this, Trinity Sunday has held its place as a festival in the Church Calendar.

His next proceeding showed very plainly that he was not disposed to temporise or conciliate.

Preceding archbishops, on various pleas, had alienated many of the manors and estates of the see of Canterbury. These he now reclaimed by summarily ejecting their occupants, without waiting for a decision from the law courts.¹ And when he was threatened with an action for illegal conduct, he haughtily replied that he should not plead in the case of lands which had notoriously belonged to the archbishopric, and had been most unjustly alienated. If Fitz-Stephen may be credited, however, his conduct was less arbitrary than it seems; for he asserts that Becket had asked for and received a license to resume all the estates of which the see had been deprived by previous archbishops.

But here again he acted with impolicy, however well founded may have been his claims. Among the nobility he created many enemies. He offended the Earl of Clare, whose beautiful sister found much favour in the eyes of Henry, by calling upon him to do homage for the honour and castle of Tunbridge. Others were angered by his resumption of the custody of Rochester Castle, which William the Conqueror had granted to the archbishopric. And many of the royal chaplains² were irritated and alarmed, fearing that his severe justice would deprive them of the churches which they had secured by intrigue and bribery.

Not the less, when Henry returned to England at Christmas 1162, and Becket, accompanied by his pupil, the young prince, met him at Southampton, the old friendship burned as brightly and as steadily as ever. Remembering only their long and happy intercourse, prelate and king embraced with unaffected cordiality, and renewed their professions of esteem and regard for one another. So completely was Becket restored to his

¹ Herbert of Bosham.

² Fitz-Stephen.

place in the royal affections, that his enemies found it prudent to drop their complaints, and join in the general chorus which extolled the new archbishop's charity and devotion.

In May 1163 the Archbishop paid another visit to France for the purpose of attending the Council of Tours. He was received with all the honours usually accorded to a sovereign. At Gravelines, where he landed, Philip, the Earl of Flanders, stood forth to bid him welcome; and while he lodged there, the nobles and gentry crowded his presence-chamber like the levée of a king. As he passed through Normandy and Maine, the splendour of his retinue dazzled the spectators;¹ and when he approached Tours, priests and citizens, knights and nobles, even the Roman cardinals, greeted him with their respectful homage. How great a mark this singular man had made upon his time we may easily imagine, when we read that, on his entering the audience-chamber, the press of ecclesiastics eager to see him was so overwhelming, that Pope Alexander, afraid of being crushed, withdrew into his private chamber. Here he received the Archbishop most graciously, but compassionating his evident fatigue, dismissed him quickly. "Go now, my brother," said he, "and refresh yourself; you must need repose after the toils of your journey."

He was lodged, with his retinue, in the King's castle, where, on the following morning, priests and monks and prelates hastened to offer their salutations, and were soon followed, for a similar purpose, by the principal burghers and magistrates of the city.

To the Pope his presence was, in truth, a matter for rejoicing. The Roman Church was then in a state of schism; a numerous party espousing the claims of Victor as pope, another not less numerous advocating those of Alexander. The latter had summoned the Council of Tours, which was attended by

¹ Herbert of Bosham.

17 cardinals, 124 bishops, and 144 abbots;¹ and Becket's presence was a proof of the adhesion to his cause of the King of England, then second in power and influence only to the Western Emperor. The fame of the man, the dignity of his position, his reputed favour with Henry, the importance of his support, all united to exalt him in the eyes of the Roman Pontiff; and when the synod assembled in the Church of St Maurice (May the 19th), the London citizen's son was seated, with his suffragans, in the place of honour on the right hand of the Pope.

For the future peace of Henry and the Archbishop, his attendance at this council proved most unfortunate.

The synodical sermon was preached by Arnulf, Bishop of Lisieux, a man of ability and eloquence; and he inveighed, in earnest language, against the tyranny of those princes who sought to endanger the unity and shake the independence of the Church. Arnulf was thinking of the Emperor; but Becket applied his allusions to his own royal master, of whose designs against ecclesiastical immunities he was by no means ignorant. His imagination *caught fire*. With all the enthusiasm of his character he adopted a new object, he set before himself a new aim; he would be something more than an active and independent primate; a second Anselm,² he would assert the supremacy of Rome, and defy, on all occasions and at whatever cost, the encroachments of the secular power.

Having obtained the confirmation of several privileges conceded by former popes to the Anglican Church, Becket returned to England. The King received him cordially, and, as a proof of his favour, attended the consecration of the Abbey of Read-

¹ Milman's "History of Latin Christianity."

² He applied to the Pope, who evaded his request, to canonise his predecessor Anselm; but the canonisation did not take place until the fifteenth century.

ing, and the more solemn and imposing ceremony of the translation of the remains of St Edward the Confessor to a new tomb in Westminster Abbey.

The latter ceremony Dean Stanley briefly describes :¹—

“At midnight on the 13th of October 1163, Lawrence, in his new-born dignity of mitred abbot, accompanied by Becket, opened this grave before the high altar, and saw, it was said, in complete preservation, the body of the dead king. Even the long, white, curling beard was still visible. The ring of St John was taken out and deposited as a relic. The vestments (with less reverence than we should think permissible) were turned into three splendid copes. An Irishman and a clerk from Winchester were cured of some malady, supposed to be demoniacal possession. The whole ceremony ended with the confirmation of the celebrated Gilbert Folliot as Bishop of London.”²

In this promotion Becket and the King were both of one mind, the latter not foreseeing that he was advancing to a position of great power his bitterest enemy and ablest rival. It is a proof his magnanimity, however, that he acquiesced in it, for Folliot had already shown signs of hostile feeling against him. Yet no trace of anger or jealousy can be detected in the letter which Becket addressed to him :³—

“Thomas, by God's grace humble minister of the Church of Canterbury, to his venerable brother Gilbert, by the same grace Bishop of Hereford, health.”

“That the city of London surpasses in grandeur all the other cities of this kingdom is well known to all of us, my brother, for the business of the whole realm is therein transacted ; it is the residence of the King, and frequented more than any other by his nobles. For this reason, it is important that the Church of London, which has now lost its ruler, should receive for its new bishop a man whose personal merit, attainments in learning, and prudence in managing public business, shall not be unworthy of the dignity

¹ Dean Stanley's “Memorials of Westminster Abbey,” pp. 124, 125,

² He was translated from Hereford, the first instance of a canonical translation of an English bishop.

³ Gilberti Folliot Epist., tome i. ep. 145 (cit. by Giles).

of that see. After much deliberation in this matter, it is the unanimous opinion of the clergy, the King, ourself, and the apostolic Pontiff, that the general welfare of the kingdom and the interests of the Church will best be promoted by your being translated to exercise the pastoral care over the diocese of London. To this end I have received the instructions of our lord the Pope ; and I enjoin you, by virtue of his authority, to give your assent without delay to the Church of London, passed in presence of our lord the King, and with the consent of the whole clergy and ourself ; and to take the government of the aforesaid Church into your hands with promptitude corresponding to the necessity which exists for its interests to be committed to such an able person. And I entreat of you, my brother, that whereas you are bound to this by virtue of your obedience to ourself, so you may be led by your own inclinations to undertake the duties of this important trust. Thus, not only sincere affection, but also proximity of place, will unite us both in the same good work, to give one another mutual assistance in ministering to the necessities of God's Church."¹

So far no open contest had arisen between the King and Becket, but it is probable that the latter saw it could not be long deferred. And it came at length ; the prelude to the prolonged battle in which Becket fell a victim.

At a council held in the royal palace of Woodstock (A.D. 1164), the King proposed that the payment formerly made to the sheriffs of the counties of two shillings per annum for each hide of land should thenceforth revert to the crown. Surely this was an act of the most unalloyed despotism, and the council may well have listened to the royal proposition with astonishment. But Becket alone had the courage to denounce it. Such opposition, on the part of the prelate whom Henry had honoured and loved, excited him beyond all control, and he burst forth, "By God's eyes, the money shall be paid as revenue, and registered in the King's books." Becket, equally firm, answered, "And, by God's eyes, no such payment shall be made from land of mine ; of the Church's right, not one penny !"

¹ We have given this letter *in extenso*, as a specimen of Becket's epistolary style.

The King said no more; but thenceforth, according to Edward Grim, immediately began to direct his anger against the clergy, because any calumny he might cast upon them would redound more especially on the Archbishop as their head.

Another circumstance, occurring almost simultaneously, still further embittered the King's mind. Becket had bestowed the living of Eynesford, which belonged to the See of Canterbury, on a priest named Lawrence. The lord of the manor, claiming the right of nomination, expelled Lawrence's people, and was forthwith excommunicated by the Archbishop. He applied to the King for protection, and Henry required Becket to give him absolution. He answered that it was not for the King to issue such a command; excommunication and absolution were purely matters of spiritual jurisdiction. Henry replied, that it was an infringement of his royal dignity for a bishop to excommunicate one of his tenants-in-chief without first consulting him. At this time Becket seems to have been unwilling to proceed to extremities, and, after some delay, granted the required absolution. "He has done it so tardily," said the King, "that now I do not thank him for it."¹

We have henceforth to regard Henry and the Archbishop as open adversaries, as the leaders of two hostile factions, whose respective watchwords were "The Crown" and "The Church." Round the King were gathered the officers of state, the lawyers, the justiciaries, the great nobles, many of the abbots, and most of the bishops, who were influenced either by jealousy, fear of the crown, or by a conservative yearning after tranquillity. Round Becket assembled, as soon as his earnestness was recognised, the "religious world"—the great body of the people—the masses of the hardy, ignorant, suffering commons, who looked up to him as a saint and a prophet, capable

¹ Fitz-Stephen.

of redressing the wrongs that had for so many generations afflicted them. Briefly stated, the quarrel between Becket and Henry was a quarrel for the supreme power; a quarrel which, had it ended successfully for Becket, might eventually have elevated the primacy into a papacy, less extensive in its sway, but not less absolute in its power than the Roman papacy. Knowing, as we now know, that of all despotisms an ecclesiastical is the worst, we may feel astonished that the common people should so ardently have espoused the Archbishop's cause. But it is to be remembered that the Church was then the ally and protector of the commons; that if the town clergy were frequently dissolute and cruel, the nobles and their retainers surpassed them both in vice and cruelty; that the yeoman who held of priest or bishop was happier far than he who held of knight or baron; that the great towns and richer villages flourished most in the sacred shadow of minster or monastery. We must beware of judging the events of the twelfth century from the point of view of the nineteenth; and we must remember that liberty, as we understand it, whether civil or religious, was wholly unknown to Becket and his contemporaries.

The ostensible cause of the battle between king and primate was the claim of the former to try ecclesiastics for their offences in the criminal courts. It is often asserted that the clergy,—a term then applied to all tonsured individuals,¹—almost entirely escaped punishment when they violated the law. But this is the exaggeration of party spirit. The sentence passed by the Archbishop on the greater criminals was severe enough to satisfy the demands of justice in all but exceptional cases; for the offender was deprived of orders, and of every benefice; was shut up in a monastery, and kept to strict penance during the remainder of his life. It is true he was neither hung nor

¹ Including clerks, sextons, vergers, gravediggers, and the like.

quartered, and that so far he was more fortunate than secular criminals. But the Church has never shown itself too lenient to its false sons, and we doubt whether the tales of privileged criminals and unpunished crimes, which load the pages of some of our historians, have any very satisfactory foundation. That one law should now-a-days prevail throughout the land, and control both ecclesiastic and civilian, all men are agreed ; that such a law was desirable in the reign of Henry II., we, at least, venture to doubt, because it would have tended to weaken the authority and influence of the Church, and it was for the good of the people that, under the earlier Plantagenets, the Church should preserve her authority and influence. That the people instinctively felt this to be the case we know from the support they lent to the Archbishop after he had once resolutely plunged into the struggle. The popular heart may have been impressed to some extent by his dignity of bearing and his sanctity of character, but the true cause of the love and admiration which he excited was the conviction which profoundly stirred the mind of the multitude that he was fighting their battle against a rapacious aristocracy and a despotic crown. And the Church, of which Becket became the typical hero, continued to attract the popular sympathies, until the aristocracy of England grew wise enough to step forward into their right place, and intervene between the crown and the people. Nor will it ever regain its power over the masses until some wiser and more tender-hearted Becket, with broader sympathies and more liberal views, remembers that the cause of the poor is, or should be, the cause of the Church.

The cases on which Henry more directly based his action seem to have been these : A clerk ¹ in Worcestershire seduced

¹ The reader is warned that this word does not always mean a priest or clergyman, but was applied also to inferior officials, men of letters, students of the Universities, and, generally, to all who could read and write. Hence has arisen much of the obloquy heaped upon the clergy proper.

a young lady, and murdered her father ; another, in London, stole a silver cup. The King claimed that they should be delivered up, and tried before his judges ; the Archbishop insisted on the privileges of the Church. The sentence passed on the latter is recorded : "He was deprived of his orders, and, moreover, to please the King, was branded."¹

Henry manifested his displeasure at first in an unkingly fashion. He favoured Folliot's ambitious design to convert the bishopric of London into a metropolitan see ; and he supported Clarembald, recently elected Abbot of St Augustin's, in his pretension to hold that dignity independent of the Archbishop. But, advised by the able lawyers who surrounded him, he took a bolder and wiser method of bringing matters to a crisis. He resolved on submitting to the clergy a proposal that every clerical offender convicted before an ecclesiastical tribunal should be immediately degraded, and then surrendered to the civil power for further punishment. With this design he convoked a council at Westminster, to which the bishops and abbots were duly summoned, in the month of October 1163.

It seems to have been their belief that the subject to be discussed was the claim of the Archbishop of York to be independent of the primacy. It was with surprise, therefore, as well as annoyance, that they listened to the King's explanation of his objects. Having accused the archdeacons of profiting by the sins of offenders, and required that they should call in the assistance of his own officers before they inquired into any acts of wrong-doing, he continued :—

"I am resolved that peace and tranquillity shall prevail throughout my dominions ; and great is my indignation at the disturbances occasioned through the crimes of the clergy, who do not hesitate to commit robbery of all kinds, and even

¹ Fitz-Stephen.

murder. I request, therefore, your consent, my Lord of Canterbury, and the consent of the other bishops, that when clerics are detected in crimes, and convicted, either by the judgment of the court or by their own confession, they shall be deprived of their orders, and delivered over to the officers of my court, to receive corporal chastisement, without the protection of the Church. I also demand that, while the ceremony of degradation is going on, you shall allow the presence of some of my officials, to prevent the criminal's escape."

Becket, whose keen intellect detected all the consequences that a concession of this apparently reasonable demand would ensure, and who saw that it covertly aimed a fatal blow at the independence of the Church, when called upon to give his assent, requested a day's deliberation. This being refused, he withdrew with the bishops to consult in private. He found them, as probably he was prepared to find them, disposed to yield, on the very intelligible ground that if clerks were not deterred from ill-doing by their greater privileges, they deserved to suffer a severer punishment than laymen; and some of them referred to the authority of the Old Testament, as showing that Levites, when guilty of great offences, were punished with death, and for smaller crimes with mutilation.

But Becket replied that, while admitting the truth of all they said, he could not but protest against the injustice, both before God and man, of inflicting two punishments for one offence. God, he said, never punished twice. The sentence of the Church was either just or unjust. If you do not allow that it is unjust, you admit its justice; and as it cannot be called an acquittal, it must be a condemnation. If, then, the culprit, by being degraded, undergoes this condemnation, it is not meet that for the same offence he undergo a second trial. Moreover, the liberties of the Church are in our keeping, and it is incumbent upon us to defend them, or they will be subverted.

We are taught by the example of our great High Priest that it is our duty to defend them to the death ; but hitherto we have failed in this our duty.

The timid bishops answered, perhaps through the mouth of Folliot : " No danger will ensue to the Church from the loss of her liberties. Let them perish at present rather than that we should perish. Let us submit to what the King demands, for our escape is cut off, and none will avenge our death. If we yield, we shall enjoy the inheritance of God's holy sanctuary, and repose in the secure possession of our churches. Many points must be waived in these times, on account of their great depravity." ¹

It is difficult to imagine any language more calculated to awaken the indignation of Becket's warrior-heart. In severe terms he denounced the timidity which they sought to disguise under the name of patience, and the selfishness which would suffer the liberties of the Church to be destroyed. " Foolish bishops ! " he exclaimed, " who has so blinded you ? How can you excuse yourselves for the cowardly sacrifice of God's Church ? When is the proper moment to confront danger ? Not surely in peaceful times, but in the hour of trouble the shepherd must expose himself for the sake of his flock. I call God to witness that it is not safe, it is not wise, it is not right to yield one iota of the liberties handed down to us from our fathers. Nor are we justified in exposing any one of our clerics to death, seeing that it is not lawful for us even to be present at a trial of life and death."

At these fiery words the bishops plucked up heart, and recognising the full importance of preserving the Church's liberties, they agreed to support their primate in refusing the King's demand.

On returning to the royal presence, Becket gave expression

¹ Herbert of Bosham ; *cf.* Roger of Pontigny, *apud* Giles's edit., vol. vii.

to their views accordingly. Henry's anger was great, and, waiving the immediate point of dispute, he sought to entrap them in another way. He put to them the general question, "Would they in all things conform to the customs of the realm and the royal constitutions of his ancestors?"

Becket saw the subtlety of the question, and replied readily, "We will in all things, *saving always our own order*,"—the proviso, of course, neutralising the effect of the apparent submission. The same reply was given by each bishop in succession. Determined not to be baffled, Henry again repeated his question, and again received the same answer; but this time with one exception—Hilary, Bishop of Chichester, omitting the saving clause. If he sought, by so doing, to conciliate the King, he grievously failed in his object; for Henry, turning upon him, overwhelmed the unfortunate prelate with injurious language, and exclaiming, in an outburst of fury, "By God's eyes, ye shall say nought of your order; my constitutions ye shall accept, and conform to without any reservation!"—he broke up the council. And the next morning, with characteristic meanness, he demanded of Becket the immediate surrender of the castles of honours which had been granted to him in his heyday of favour. Without further communication with the bishops, he then returned to London.

Open war was thus declared. It was in the King's power to deliver the first blows, and he struck hard. He banished from England Becket's confidential friend and counsellor, John of Salisbury; and he supported the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of London in their shameless disloyalty to their ecclesiastical superior. Becket at this period was shaken by much anxiety. He could not but see that the bishops were faint-hearted in his cause; he knew that he was opposed by the great barons, the chief officials of the royal court, the judges and magistrates; and he could not be certain of the support

of the great body of the people. The storm was gathering over his head, and he knew not where to look for shelter. In deep anguish of mind and heart, he wrote to Pope Alexander: "The iniquity of our persecutors vents on us its hatred all the more freely because of the weakened condition of the Holy Roman See; so that what they accumulate upon our heads runs down over our beards even to the skirts of our clothing." He declared that Christ was despoiled even of that which He had earned with His own blood; that the secular power had wrested His inheritance from Him; that the authority of the holy fathers was despised; and that canons of the Church failed to protect its very servants. And he bitterly expressed his regret that his lot had fallen in such evil times.

This was but the natural apprehension of a brave heart at the outset of a struggle which it knows must be desperate and protracted, and in which as yet it has failed to find loyal supporters. But we shall see that Becket soon threw off his despondency, and went down into the battle-field with a soul incapable of fear. The outlook was dark, for he was surrounded on every side by false friends and determined foes; and the court of Rome, instead of intervening on his behalf, showed a disposition to purchase Henry's favour by yielding all that he demanded. The outlook was dark, for in the Church itself lay his greatest danger; but after his first few moments of doubt, he never wavered in the self-imposed trial.¹

On his return to London, Henry determined to achieve his object by secret intrigue. Advised by Arnulph of Lisieux, he addressed himself to each bishop singly, endeavouring to detach them from the primate's cause. He assured them that, though resolved to secure a public and unqualified assent to his just claims, he pledged himself solemnly to require nothing contrary to their canonical vows. Roger of York, Hilary of

¹ Cf. Dean Milman, Canon Robertson, and Dr Lingard.

Chichester, and Gilbert of London readily agreed to withdraw the objectionable reservation, and expressed their regret that the primate had laid an undue value upon a few meaningless words. Then his emissaries assailed the Archbishop himself, and letters were procured from the Pope and cardinals authorising, and even commanding, him to yield. As we have said, Becket at the outset was temporarily overcome; so much so, indeed, that seeing himself surrounded by a network of plots, he repaired to Woodstock, where the King was holding his court, and promised his assent to the royal constitutions without further reservation of the rights of his order. The King received his submission with apparent pleasure, and replied: "You must repeat this statement in public. In public you opposed my wishes, and in public you must testify that you assent to them. Let us therefore summon a council on an early day. I will convoke my barons, and you the bishops and abbots, so that henceforth no one may dare to violate the law."¹

A public submission on the part of the Archbishop was necessary to his humiliation, and to the full assertion of the supremacy of the crown over the Church. Henry lost no time in preparing for the conclusion of this striking drama, and a council was accordingly convened to assemble at Clarendon Castle, one of the royal manors, in January 1164.

THE CONSTITUTIONS OF CLARENDON.

The Castle of Clarendon, which has given its name to so many illustrious English statesmen, and is associated with one of the most memorable events in English history, is situated on the road from Winchester to Salisbury, about two miles to the south-east of the latter city.

¹ Edward Grim.

The ancient forest was granted by the Conqueror to Humphry the Bearded, the first of the family of Bohun, one of whom erected here a castle, which, from the reign of Henry I. to that of Edward III., was used as a royal residence. It was the favourite abode of King John. After the death of the third Edward it fell into decay, though the forest continued a favourite hunting-ground with our kings. The remains of both are very scanty. Of the former, a withered fragment of flint wall; of the latter, some clumps of trees and breadths of woodland.

The council summoned by Henry II. in 1164 was attended by the two archbishops, Thomas of Canterbury and Roger of York—by eleven bishops—by nearly forty of the chief nobles—and by a crowd of inferior nobles. Our information respecting its mode of procedure is, unfortunately, very imperfect; but it would appear that on the first day Becket protested that he was ignorant of the particular constitutions of the realm which he and his bishops were required to observe; that these were recapitulated on the second day, and were found to trench largely on the privileges of the Church, many of them being characterised by the chronicler as specially invented by the “enemies of the Archbishop;”¹ and that, on the third day, they, by command of the King, were reduced into writing,² forming sixteen clauses, which he required to be signed by the prelates and nobles then present.

The laws having been copied out *in extenso*, a roll was produced, and read before the council.

The King then said, “To avoid all further dispute and contention, it is my will that the Archbishop do now set his seal to these my constitutions.”

Becket instantly replied, in a tone equally lofty, “And I

¹ Herbert of Bosham.

² By Richard de Lacy, Grand Justiciary, and Jocelin de Baillent.

declare, by God Almighty, that I will never affix my seal to constitutions such as those.”¹

He added, that it was contrary to every pledge he had given to approve of constitutions so modified and enlarged, and reduced into such a stringent form.

In sullen anger the King strode from the hall, accompanied by some or most of his barons. From a letter which Folliot afterwards addressed to the Archbishop we learn what followed:—

“We stood by you then, because it seemed to us that you were standing boldly in the spirit of the Lord. We stood immovable, and showed no sign of alarm. We stood steadfast, to the ruin of our fortunes, and prepared to encounter bodily tortures, or exile, or, if God so pleased, the Lord. Was ever father more faithfully supported by his sons in adversity? Who could be more unanimous than we were? We were all confined in one chamber, and on the third day the princes and nobles of the kingdom, bursting with fury, broke in upon our deliberations, flung back their cloaks, and stretching forth their hands to us, exclaimed—‘Listen, ye who spurn the King’s statutes, and disobey his commands. These hands, these arms, these bodies of ours, belong not to us, but to King Henry, and are ready at his nod to avenge his wrongs and work his will, whatever that may be. His commands will be law and justice in our eyes. Retract, then, your ill-advised decision, and submit to his will, that you may avoid the danger before it be too late.’”²

In great alarm and confusion, the prelates separated; and when no longer supported by mutual co-operation and counsel, the weaker spirits began to give way. Jocelyn of Salisbury and William of Norwich, trembling for their lives, urged the primate to yield. Their entreaties were supported by the Earl of Cornwall, the King’s uncle, and the Earl of Leicester, the co-justiciary of England. Becket at first was utterly inflexible; but some mysterious incident, connected apparently with the

¹ Edward Grim.

² Gilberti Fol. Epistolæ, cxliv. This letter, though suspected by some authorities, is admitted to be genuine by Milman and Pauli.

visit of two influential Knights-Templar, Richard of Hastings, Grand Master of the English order, and Hostis of Boulogne,¹ caused him after a while to yield. What passed in the interview between them can never be known ; but we suspect that they conveyed to him some secret assurance from the King, intended to soothe his scruples. At all events, he returned to the conclave of bishops, and to the amazement, and, apparently, the indignation of most of them, exclaimed : " It is God's will that I should perjure myself ; for the present I submit, and incur perjury, to repent of it hereafter as best I may." His hearers, says Folliot, were thunderstruck at these words, and gazed one upon another, groaning in spirit at the downfall of one whom they had admired as a champion of virtue and constancy.

It is doubtful, however, whether Becket signed the new code of laws,² though he verbally promised to observe them. Herbert of Bosham informs us that the King again demanded the signatures of Becket and his colleagues ; but that the former, not wishing to anger the King, and yet desirous of escaping from a false position, insinuated that a matter of so much moment ought not to be concluded hastily, and requested permission to carry home with him a copy of the roll. The Archbishop of York took a second copy, and the King a third, to be deposited in the royal archives.

Becket and his attendants then turned their backs on the royal palace, and rode off towards Winchester.

We here interrupt the course of our narrative to lay the text of the famous Constitutions before our readers. Their perusal

¹ Garnier.

² Fitz-Stephen says he did ; and if he did *not*, it is difficult to understand his after grief and remorse. But Roger of Pontigny asserts that he accepted the copy offered him, "not consenting, nor approving, but for caution and defence of the Church."

may not be very entertaining, but will not disgust the student who appreciates their value as, in effect, a bold and deliberate assertion of the royal supremacy. Lord Campbell remarks¹ that we Protestants must approve of the whole of them, for they anticipate to a considerable extent the measures adopted when the yoke of the Church of Rome was thrown off at the Reformation; but, he adds, in justice to Becket, we must acknowledge that they were in various particulars an innovation upon the principles and practices which had long prevailed. Under these constitutions, Henry would have disposed of all ecclesiastical dignities by his own authority, would have prevented all appeals to Rome, and would have been himself the "head of the Church."

These were great objects to be gained, and an English king cannot be censured for endeavouring to gain them. The misfortune was, that the country was not ripe for them; that the humiliation of the Church at that particular epoch could only result in the utter slavery and debasement of the masses. It was the Church alone which offered a career to the low-born and humble; which offered them the sacred protection of the tonsure and the gown; which furnished the needy scholar with the means of satisfying his divine thirst after knowledge. That the cause of Becket was their own cause, the people instinctively recognised; and from this date he became the popular hero, the darling of the national heart.

While not condemning the motives and policy of Henry, we are of opinion that Becket's conduct and policy are quite as worthy of a lenient judgment. We must remember, that however objectionable the so-called liberties of the Church may appear to us from a modern point of view, they were not so considered by Becket's contemporaries. The modern idea of

¹ Lord Campbell's "Lives of the Chancellors," i. 80.

government, says an able writer,¹ is an equal system of law for every part of the territory and for every class of the nation. In the middle ages, every class of men, every district, every city sought to isolate itself within a jurisprudence of its own. Every town endeavoured to approach as nearly as it could to the condition of a separate republic ; every province to obtain a judicial system independent of the rest of the kingdom. For the clergy, therefore, to be amenable only to a clerical judicature was no monstrous anomaly.

We must also remember, says the same authority, that ecclesiastical privileges were not so exclusively priestly privileges as we sometimes fancy. They sheltered not only ordained ministers, but ecclesiastical officers of every kind : the church courts also claimed jurisdiction in the causes of widows and orphans. In a word, the privileges for which Becket fought and died rescued a large part of the people, and that the most helpless, from the bloody grasp of the royal tribunals to the milder jurisdiction of the bishop. Becket's own apologists state the King's case, however, very fairly, and do full justice to his motives, to his desire to restore perfect order and peace throughout his dominions. Herbert of Bosham frankly acknowledges that both king and primate were zealous for God, and wisely leaves it to God Himself to judge whose zeal was according to knowledge. Henry, at the outset, appears to us the statesman of broader and clearer vision ; and had he openly thrown off the jurisdiction of Rome, we must have given all praise to the boldness of his policy. But by afterwards appealing to the Pope, he abandoned his own cause ; and therefore we accord to Becket the higher praise of adhering, through good and ill report, with heroic steadfastness, to the principles which he conscientiously believed to be right.

¹ *National Review*, x. 343, 344.

THE CONSTITUTIONS OF CLARENDON.¹

1. If any controversy shall arise between laics, or between clerks and laics, or between clerks, let it be tried and determined in the court of our lord the King.

2. Churches belonging to the King's fee shall not be given in perpetuity without his consent and license.

3. Clerks arraigned and accused of any matter whatsoever, being summoned by the King's justice, shall come into his court, there to answer on whatever point it shall seem proper to the King's court to require an answer : provided alway, that the King's justice shall send into the court of Holy Church to see in what way the matter shall there be handled ; and if the clerk shall confess or be convicted, he shall no longer obtain protection from the Church.

4. No archbishops, bishops, or exalted personages of the kingdom, are allowed to depart the same without license of the King ; and if they should have the King's permission to go abroad, they shall give security that neither in going nor staying will they procure any evil or damage to the King or his kingdom.

5. Excommunicated persons shall not be bound to give security or take oath to remain where they are, but only security or pledge to stand to the judgment of the Church, in order to their absolution.

6. Laics ought not to be accused but by certain specified and legal accusers and witnesses, and that in the presence of the bishop ; yet so that the archdeacon may not lose his right, nor any advantage which accrues to him therefrom. And if the accused parties be such that no one dares or is willing to accuse them, the sheriff, on demand from the bishop, shall cause twelve loyal men of the village or town to be sworn before the bishop to try out the truth according to their conscience.

7. No one who holds of the King in chief, nor any of his domestic servants, shall be excommunicated, nor his lands placed under an interdict, until the King has been consulted, if he be in the kingdom, or, if he be abroad, the justiciary, that he may do what is right in the matter, and so that whatever belongs to the King's court may therein be settled, and the same, on the other hand, if the ecclesiastical court.

8. Appeals, if they arise, must be made from the archdeacon to the

¹ See Wilkins, by whom they are taken from Matthew Paris. Cf. Herbert of Bosham.

bishop, and from the bishop to the archbishop ; and if the archbishop shall fail in administering justice, the parties shall appear before our lord the King, that by his precept the controversy may be terminated in the archbishop's court, so that it may not proceed further without leave of the lord the King.

9. If any difference arise between a cleric and a laic, or between a laic and a cleric, concerning any tenement which the cleric pretendeth is held by *franc-almoigne* (i.e., as eleemosynary), but the laic claims to be a *lay fee*, it shall be determined by the voice of twelve legally-qualified men, according to the custom of the King's court, and in the presence of his justice, whether the tenement belongeth to *franc-almoigne* or to the *lay fee*. And if it be found to belong to *franc-almoigne*, the plea shall be tried out in the ecclesiastical court ; but if to the *lay fee*, in the King's court, unless both parties claim to hold of the same bishop or baron. But if each shall claim to hold of the same bishop or baron, the plea shall be in his court ; yet, with this further proviso, that he who before was seized, shall not lose his seizin pending the time because of the above-mentioned verdict.

10. Whosoever is an inhabitant of any city, castle, borough, or any demesne lands of the lord the King, if he shall be cited by the archdeacon or bishop concerning any fault about which he ought to answer them, and will not obey their citation, it shall be lawful to place him under an interdict ; but he ought not to be excommunicated before the King's chief officer of that town be made acquainted with the case, so that he may compel him to give satisfaction ; and if such officer shall fail therein, he shall be in the mercy of the King, and then the bishop may amerce the party accused by ecclesiastical process.

11. Archbishops, bishops, and all other ecclesiastical persons in the kingdom who hold of the King *in capite*, may enjoy their possessions of our lord the King as a barony ; and, for that reason, are to answer to the King's justices and ministers, and to follow and perform all royal rights and customs, and ought, like other barons, to make their appearance at trials in the King's court, until the judgment proceeds to death or mutilation.

12. When an archbishopric, bishopric, abbacy, or priory in the gift of the lord the King shall fall vacant, it shall be in his hand, and he shall receive from it all the revenues and proceeds thereof, as in the case of his demesnes. And when he pleases to provide for that church, the lord the King ought to send for the chief persons of that church, and the election shall be made in the King's chapel, with the assent of the King, and with the advice of such persons of his realm as he shall call thereto ; and the person elect

shall there, before his consecration, do homage and fealty to the King as liege lord of his life and limbs and earthly honour, saving his order.

13. If any of the King's nobles shall refuse to render justice to an archbishop, or bishop, or archdeacon, either for him or his tenants, the King shall adjudicate. And if, perchance, any person shall refuse the lord the King his right, the archbishops, bishops, and archdeacons shall call him to account, and compel him to render satisfaction to the lord the King.

14. The chattels of those who are under forfeiture to the King shall not be detained in any church or churchyard, in opposition to the King's justice, because they belong to the King, whether found within the church and its precincts, or without.

15. Pleas concerning debts, which are owing upon troth-plight, or without troth-plight, belong to the jurisdiction of the King's court.

16. The sons of villains, or peasants, shall not be condemned without the consent of the lord in whose land they are known to have been born.

Sadly and sorrowfully the Primate rode back on his way from Clarendon to Winchester. He felt that he had been false to his faith, and his conscience smote him bitterly.

Sadly and sorrowfully rode his attendants, lamenting the depravity of the times in which they lived, and the unexpected weakness of their master.

Said Grim, his cross-bearer, loudly enough for the Archbishop to overhear him, "Methinks the court is yearning to overthrow everything. Christ Himself is not safe, nor this sanctuary, from these devilish machinations. The very pillars of the earth are quaking, and while the shepherd flees, the wolf devours the flock."

Sadly and sorrowfully the Primate listened, not reproving the outspokenness of his companions, for he was in one of those moods when the mind rejoices to be lashed with stinging censures. At length, Herbert of Bosham, approaching him, endeavoured to pour balm upon the wounds.

"My lord, why are you so cast down? You were not wont

to despair, yet now you do not address a word to any one of us."

Becket.—"And no wonder, for I cannot help fancying that my sins are the cause that the Church of England is, thus reduced to bondage. My predecessors ruled the Church successfully, and guided her through many and well-known dangers; but now, instead of reigning triumphantly, she is reduced to servitude, and all for me, miserable wretch that I am! Oh, that I had perished! Oh, that no human eye had ever again beheld me! Yet is it but just that the Church should be afflicted in my time; for I was taken from the court to fill this station, not from the cloister, nor from a religious house, nor from a school of the Saviour, but from the palace of Cæsar, a vain and arrogant man. A feeder of birds, I was suddenly made a feeder of men. A patron of mountebanks, I became a shepherd over many souls. My own vineyard I neglected, and yet was entrusted with the care of so many others. My past life went astray from the path of salvation, and behold, these are my fruits! It is evident that God hath wholly forsaken me, nor deems me worthy even of ejection from the hallowed see in which I have been placed."¹

With weeping eyes, and beating his breast, he continued his journey to Winchester.

From Winchester, the Primate despatched a confidential messenger to the Pope at Sens. During his absence, he refrained from the performance of his sacred duties, and by the severest penances showed his keen contrition for his want of courage at Clarendon. All the people knew, and all the Church, how bitterly he repented of his humiliation before the King.

In about forty days his messenger returned, bringing with him absolution for the offence he had committed, and assur-

¹ Herbert of Bosham; Edward Grim.

ing him of the sympathy and friendship of the head of the Church. He then made a journey, for some unexplained reason, to the royal court at Woodstock, but the King refused to see him ;¹ and from Woodstock, he repaired to Canterbury. Here his stay was but of brief duration, for reports (undoubtedly false ones) reached him that his life was in danger, and he resolved upon leaving the kingdom. He endeavoured to obtain an invitation or summons from the Pope, but Alexander feared to offend the King by receiving his rebellious subject with the pomp his dignity demanded, and courteously intimated that at such a crisis he was unwilling to deprive the Church of England of its primate's services. But verily believing that he stood in peril of his life, and not yet having risen to the stature of the martyr's spirit, he resolved on carrying out his design.

To his manor of Aldington, on the Kentish coast, he privately betook himself, rising at midnight, without the knowledge of his household,² and travelling across the country with only two attendants. On the sea-shore they found a small boat, and, embarking in it, made sail for France ; but the winds proved contrary, and, as morning dawned, they were driven back to the English coast.³

A second attempt, not less secretly made, proved, in like manner, unsuccessful ; but his servants, discovering their master's absence, broke up the household in alarm, and many of them dispersed. One of his attendants, however, returned to Canterbury on the following day, and located himself in one of the apartments of the palace. In the evening, after he had supped, he bewailed a while the sufferings to which his master

¹ Herbert of Bosham.

² By the Constitutions of Clarendon, it was forbidden to leave the country without the King's license.

³ Fitz-Stephen says at "Rumeneye," or Romney.

was exposed ; and then, the hour being late, ordered the servant-in-waiting to shut the outer door of the court, that they might go to bed. The servant accordingly went forth with a lighted torch, to return immediately in great terror, asserting that he had seen the Archbishop crouching in a corner of the court. Such indeed was the case. The Archbishop entered into his palace, and explained to the few monks who had not deserted it that he had attempted to escape, but that God had seen fit to defeat his purpose.

No doubt he gratefully recognised what he considered to be the Divine interposition, when, early next morning, the King's officers appeared, stating they had received intelligence of the Archbishop's flight, and had come to confiscate his possessions. At his presence, however, they retired in dismay. To soothe the King's indignation, Becket hastened to his court at Woodstock. He was admitted to an audience, in which both parties behaved with decorum. But Henry observed, with an irony which truth made bitter :—"And so, my lord, you wish to leave my kingdom? I suppose that it is not large enough to hold us both."

An effort was soon afterwards made by the Bishop of Evreux to accomplish a reconciliation between these two great personages. Henry replied, to all the prelate's arguments, that there was only one way by which peace could be secured ; by the archbishop and the bishops uniting to procure the Pope's ratification of his constitutions. Becket readily assented to the royal stipulation, from a well-grounded conviction that Alexander, however he might temporise, and, in most matters, play into the King's hands, would never ratify a code of laws which swept away the proud independence of the Church. Negotiations, however, were commenced. But during their dilatory course, the Anti-Pope, Alexander's rival, died, and as all controversy died with him, he removed from Sens to Rome, and

consequently to a distance from the scene of action, which made communication more difficult. Meanwhile Henry abandoned his pacific disposition, and, with the view of terrifying Becket into self-exile, or into the resignation of the primacy, he suddenly attacked him in a wholly unexpected quarter. He issued his royal summons to all bishops, abbots, earls, barons, high officers of state, and to all of every kind who were of any authority and repute, to meet him in council assembled at Northampton, on the 6th of October 1164.¹ To this council the Archbishop was not summoned, as became his dignity, but commanded to attend by a precept issued through the sheriff of Kent. The insult was significant; he was to be regarded as a criminal, charged with high crimes and misdemeanours, not as the Primate of all England.

Becket's nature, however, was too lofty to be moved by such petty annoyances. On the day appointed, he repaired to the council; but the King, who had beguiled the tedium of his journey by hawking along every stream and river he encountered, entered the town so late that the Archbishop could not see him that night.²

The next morning, after mass and prayers, he went to the court, which was held in the royal castle.³ Having entered the first apartment, he took his seat; and when the King appeared, rose and bowed, standing ready, "with a cheerful countenance," to salute him on the cheek with the kiss of peace. But this customary salutation the King avoided. Becket then began the conversation by complaining that one William de Courcy had occupied a house allotted for his servants' lodging, and requested the King to expel him from it. This the King

¹ Garnier, 77, 78.

² The Archbishop and his train were lodged in St Andrew's monastery, then recently restored by Simon, Earl of Northampton.

³ Fitz-Stephen, i. 223-225.

promised. He then referred to a summons that had been sent him in reply to an action brought against him by John the Marshal. This man had begun a suit in the archiepiscopal court for the recovery of certain land within the archiepiscopal manor of Paganham, and during the hearing of the cause had appeared with a brief from the King into the court. The judgment, however, went against him, whereupon he disputed the jurisdiction of the court; but in taking the necessary oath, he used a jest-book, which he took from under his cloak, though the judges refused to receive it for so solemn a purpose.

John the Marshal then repaired to the King, and readily obtained a summons for the Archbishop to appear in the King's court on the "day of the elevation of the holy cross." On the day appointed, four knights appeared on the Primate's behalf, with letters from himself and the sheriff of Kent, specifying the injustice done by John, and the failure of his evidence. Henry, indignant at the Archbishop's non-appearance in person, treated his representatives rudely, threatened them severely for bringing false excuses in evasion of his royal summons, and refused to let them go until they had given bail. Soon afterwards, John the Marshal prevailed upon the King to appoint another day, and the summons was issued through the sheriff of Kent. "This," said Becket, "is the only summons I have received to attend your council; but I am now present, in obedience to your command, to answer in this matter of John the Marshal."

Henry replied that the plaintiff was then engaged in his Court of Exchequer at London, with the collectors and other officers of the revenue, but that he would arrive the next day, and the cause should then be heard.

The next day came, and lo! in the presence of all the nobles and all the bishops, except him of Rochester, the

Archbishop, to his infinite surprise, was publicly charged with treason, for having neglected to attend on the King's summons in the matter of John the Marshal, without offering a valid plea for his non-appearance.¹ The Primate urged that at the time he was suffering from ill-health, and that he had duly sent his representatives. But his judges were influenced by a foregone conclusion. They knew that Henry wished to crush the Archbishop, and not one among them had the courage to stand forward as his defender. They found him guilty. Yet they shrank from passing sentence upon an innocent man, and it was only at the King's express command that it was finally pronounced by Henry of Winchester. He was adjudged to be "at the King's mercy;" in other words, he was liable to the forfeiture of all his moveable possessions. Becket offered no resistance; indeed, throughout this trying scene, and all the cruel proceedings of this iniquitous council, he behaved with calm dignity; but to those around him he said, "Though I hold my tongue, all posterity will speak for me, and will denounce so unjust a sentence."

Successful in his first blow, Henry proceeded in all haste to deal another. He charged his former favourite and trusted councillor with having received £300 from the wardenship of the castles of Eye and Berkhamstead. The money had been expended in the repair of these castles, and of the Tower of London; but Becket contented himself with saying, that no question of money should ever lie between him and his sovereign, and gave as security for the repayment the Earl of Gloucester, William of Eynesford, and another.

On the third day, Friday, October the 9th, he was required to refund five hundred marks, which the King had lent him during the war of Toulouse; a war carried on for the King's,

¹ Garnier, 35-38; Roger of Pontigny, 135, 136. See also vol. i. of "State Trials."

and not the Archbishop's benefit ; and a similar sum advanced to him at the same time by a Jew, for which the King had become surety. With respect to the former amount, Becket answered that it was a gift, and not a loan ; that it was unworthy of his highness to compel payment ; and that it would be more gracious in him to remember the many services which Becket had rendered him during his chancellorship. The court, however, decided against him, and required him to find security for the repayment of the money. The Archbishop observed that he had property in the kingdom to a much larger amount ; but the nobles then reminded him that by the first sentence of the council all his possessions had been confiscated, and they added, with shameless hate, that he must find bail or be cast into prison. Happily, among the faithless, five faithful spirits were found who offered themselves as the Archbishop's sureties ; and, so far, the King's designs were baffled. So evident was it, however, that Henry had determined, at all hazards, to crush the unfortunate Archbishop, that thenceforth the knights and nobles ceased to pay him the usual visits of respect.

The last and heaviest charge was now brought forward. The Archbishop was ordered to account for the revenues of all bishoprics and abbacies which, during their vacancies, had been paid over to the Chancellor ; a total, it was estimated, of three thousand marks. The injustice of such a demand was obvious. In the first place, on Becket's consecration as Primate, he had been publicly released, as was customary, of all pecuniary obligations to the state ; in the second, it was well known that the whole had been expended in the public service ; and in the third, no notice of the intended charge had been given him, and it was impossible for him, therefore, to be prepared with a satisfactory answer. In open defiance of all justice and equity, his pleas were overruled. He then asked for time to consult with his

brethren, the bishops. The King replied, with an oath, that he would only give him until the next day.

On the following morning, October 10th, the Primate held a consultation with the bishops and abbots, but discovered, to his mortification, that his sole firm friend amongst them was Henry, Bishop of Winchester, the brother of the late King Stephen. He it was who advised that the King's avarice should be tempted, and accordingly, repairing to the royal presence, he offered him two thousand marks to stay further proceedings. But Henry wanted vengeance, not money, and refused the generous prelate's offer. The bishop, on his return to the conference, declared that he, for one, was of opinion that the Archbishop should resist the royal demands, which, through the person of Becket, endangered and humiliated the Church. But there were others whom the King had bribed, or whom their envy and jealousy influenced against their primate, and who advised that, as the King's anger was so violent and unappeasable, it would be better he should resign his see.

Hilary, Bishop of Chichester, exclaimed, "Would to God you were only Thomas, and not Archbishop!" thus confessing his admiration of the man and his fear of the King. Gilbert Folliot, his old enemy, insidiously remarked, "Would you but remember, my father, the condition from which his highness raised you, and the benefits he has bestowed upon you, and the ruin which impends over the Church and over all of us should you persist in your defiance of the King, you would not only surrender your see, but, were it in your power, ten times as much; and, mayhap, the King would reward your humility by giving it back to you." "Enough!" said the Archbishop, coldly; "your opinion is evident, and so are your motives."

The conference came to no determination, and its members wished to adjourn, but found the door had been fastened upon

them. The Primate then announced his desire of speaking to two of the Earls who were with the King. On their appearance the door was thrown open. Becket addressed them :—

“Having discovered the whole matter for which the lord our King has convened us, we wish to consult certain persons better informed than ourselves in its details, but who are not now present. It is therefore our humble request that this meeting may be adjourned until to-morrow, when, if it please God, we will give our answer.”

The Bishops of London and Rochester were deputed to carry this message to the King ; but the former, as spokesman, so craftily worded it as to imply that the Archbishop sought for the delay in order to make the needful preparations for obeying the royal demand. The Earls returned, granting the required adjournment upon this understanding, which Becket instantly repudiated, explaining that the promised answer on the morrow might not be in accordance with the King's wishes, but whatever should be dictated to him from Heaven. The council then broke up in confusion, and the Archbishop returned to the hall of the monastery almost unattended, a disgraced, and, apparently, a doomed man. Finding his table empty of guests, he sent out his servants to summon to the feast the poor and the sick, the lame and the blind, who loaded him with their blessings, and encouraged him by their sympathy.

The next day being Sunday, Becket did not leave his lodgings, and on the Monday, his overstrained frame giving way, he was confined to his bed. The King doubted the reality of his illness, but it was confirmed by the Earls of Leicester and Cornwall, who visited him in his lodgings, and found him weak in body, but strong of heart. “Let no one,” he exclaimed, “suppose this to be a device on my part to avoid appearing

at the council : to-morrow I will go at all hazards, even if I am carried thither in a litter.”¹

Tuesday, the 13th of October, proved an eventful day in the life of Thomas à Becket. Early in the morning the bishops waited upon him, and once more urged his resignation and unreserved submission to the royal mercy. By this time he had learned that he carried with him the sympathies of the people, and was more firmly resolved than ever on the bold and defiant course congenial to his character. “My brethren,” he said, “our enemies, as you see, are closing round us, and the whole world is against us ; but most I regret that you, the sons of my mother, the Church, shrink from my side. Though I should be silent, yet will posterity declare that you forsook me in the battle—me who, though a sinner, am yet your father and archbishop. For two whole days you have been judges over me, have been a mote in my eye and a thorn in my side ; you who ought to have battled with me against my foes. And I doubt not, from the words you have let drop, that you would sit as judges over me in criminal causes, no less than in civil, before this secular tribunal. But I now enjoin upon you all, in virtue of your obedience, and in peril of your orders, not to be present in any cause which may be moved against my person ; and to prohibit you from so doing, I hereby appeal to that consoler of the distressed, the Holy Roman See. Moreover, if, as it has been reported publicly, the secular authority should lay hands upon me, I command you, by your vow of obedience, to put forth the censures of the Church in behalf of your father and archbishop. For of this be assured, though enemies shall press hard against me, and the world persecute me, and though this frail body, because of the weakness of the flesh, shall yield to their persecution, yet shall my spirit never

¹ Edward Grim.

yield ; nor, by God's mercy, will I ever turn my back in flight, nor basely desert the flock committed to my care."

Gilbert Folliot, as might have been expected, protested against this dignified speech ; but most of the bishops heard it in silence, and two of them—Henry of Winchester and Jocelyn of Salisbury—with open assent and sympathy.

The Archbishop now proceeded to the conventual church, which was crowded by a reverent though excited multitude. Arrayed in full pontificals, and in the *pallium*, the emblem of archiepiscopal dignity, only worn on solemn occasions, his tall figure drawn up to its full height, his noble countenance wearing an expression of devout resignation, he entered St Stephen's Chapel in solemn procession, and knelt before the shrine of the protomartyr, as if to intimate that he too was prepared to suffer martyrdom for the Church. The significance of this action was fully understood by the crowd, and tears filled every eye. There was a hush of silence, and then Becket's voice arose, loud, clear, and unshaken, chanting the introit for St Stephen's day—*Etenim sederunt principes* : "Princes also did sit and speak against me."

The service concluded, he proposed to repair to the King's court in his priestly robes, carrying his cross, and walking barefoot. Had he carried out his design, a collision might have occurred of fatal consequences both to crown and Church. But he was persuaded by some trusted friends to unrobe, and assume his ordinary dress, that of a canon regular. When he arrived in the castle-yard, however, he took his cross from the hands of his cross-bearer, and proceeded to enter the hall on his way to the royal chamber. Meantime the portcullis fell, the gates were closed, and the Archbishop was virtually a prisoner. While he carried his cross, however, he enjoyed the privileges of sanctuary, and he refused to part with it, either to Robert, Bishop of Hereford, or to Gilbert Folliot, of London,

the latter of whom made an effort to wrest it from his hands.¹ "Look now, my Lord Archbishop," said he, "such conduct can only break the peace; for the King will arm himself with the sword, and then we shall have King and Primate well matched against one another." "Be it so," replied Becket; "my cross is the sign of peace, and I will not part with it; but the King's sword is an instrument of war."²

The King had retired to a private apartment, whither the nobles and bishops were summoned one by one, while Becket sat in the hall unnoticed, and with none but his immediate attendants round him. Loud voices and a clang of arms being heard, these faithful servants supposed some deed of violence was contemplated. "My Lord," said Herbert of Bosham, "if they lay hands upon you, it will still be in your power to excommunicate them." "Far be it from our Lord," said the gentle Fitz-Stephen, "to do as you say; rather will he imitate the example of God's ancient confessors and martyrs, and pray for his persecutors and enemies. If it please God that he shall suffer in this hallowed cause, his soul will enjoy happiness in heaven, and his memory on earth will be loaded with blessings." He was about to add a few words of further encouragement, when one of the King's marshals forbade him to speak to the Archbishop. Whereupon, with a gesture full of meaning, he pointed to the cross, as if to recommend to his master the gentle spirit of Him who in His last agony breathed a prayer of forgiveness for His murderers.³

The bishops, meanwhile, had represented to Henry that

¹ To one who had previously expostulated with him for suffering the Primate to carry his own cross, Folliot had answered, with the vulgarity of a little mind: "My good friend, he was always a fool, and will continue a fool to the end." The hero is always a fool in the eyes of the cunning.

² Cf. Herbert of Bosham, Garnier, and Roger of Pontigny.

³ Fitz-Stephen, *apud* Giles.

their primate had appealed to the Pope against his unjust sentence, and that he had solemnly inhibited them from again presuming to sit in judgment upon him. At this the King grew very wroth, declaring it was a violation of the Constitutions of Clarendon, and sent the Earls of Leicester and Cornwall to remind him of his oath to observe them, and once more to demand the accounts of his chancellorship. Becket, in reply, effectively vindicated his conduct. He pointed out that he had been summoned only to answer in the matter of John the Marshal, and yet other actions had been unjustly raised against him; that as for his expenditure while chancellor, it had been in the King's service, in which he had also spent his own private income; that when he became archbishop, the King had indemnified him for all previous transactions; and, in conclusion, he repeated his appeal to the Pope, and his prohibition of the bishops from sitting in judgment on their superior.

The Earls and their attendants could make no answer to these forcible arguments, but, as they retired, some of them spoke aloud of the terrible punishments former monarchs had inflicted on rebellious ecclesiastics. Some of the bishops, however, endeavoured to persuade him to yield; and Roger, the Archbishop of York, was especially strenuous in his efforts to remove a rival from his path. "Hence, Sathanas!" was Becket's reply.

Another conference was held in the King's chamber; and, after awhile, the bishops of the King's party, headed by Hilary of Chichester, once more appeared before their superior. Hilary acted as spokesman:—

"My lord," he said, "we have just cause of complaint against you, in that you have placed us in a most difficult position by the prohibition you have laid upon us. When we were all assembled with you at Clarendon, we were required

by our lord the King to promise obedience to his royal dignities, and, to save us from doubt, they were reduced into a written form ; we pledged our assent to them,—your lordship first, and we, the suffragans, by your orders. The King then demanded an oath of us, and also that we should attach our seals to the writing ;¹ but we replied that our oath, as priests, to observe his laws in good faith, without dishonesty, and lawfully, ought to be sufficient. In this the King acquiesced ; yet now, my lord, you forbid us to participate in the proceedings of the King's court, which, nevertheless, we are bound to do by the laws both you and we swore to observe at Clarendon. Therefore do we hold that you, my lord, have perjured yourself, and we declare that we can^o no longer yield obedience to a perjured archbishop ; wherefore we submit ourselves to the protection of our lord the Pope, and summon you by appeal to his presence."

The Archbishop replied :—

"I hear what you say, my lords, and will meet you on the day of appeal ; but all that was done at Clarendon was done *saving the honour of the Church*. For, as you yourselves have just admitted, we attached three conditions to our promise, which secured the safety of our ecclesiastical privileges. Whatever militates against the faith of the Church and the laws of God, cannot 'in good faith' or 'lawfully' be done ; nor can the 'dignity' of a King consist in destroying the liberty of the Church, which he has sworn to defend. But the King also sent his royal dignities, as you term them, to be confirmed by the Pope, and they were sent back, not confirmed, but annulled. This is an example which the Holy Father has set before us for our imitation. If we erred at Clarendon (for all flesh is

¹ This statement surely shows that Becket did not append his *signature* to the Clarendon Constitutions, but only assented to them by word of mouth.

weak), we should resume our courage, and again contend with our foe, in the strength of God's Holy Spirit. If we pledged ourselves to what was unlawful, you well know that an unlawful oath is not binding."

As he concluded this speech, the nobles, headed by the Earl of Leicester, defiled into the hall from the royal chamber. The Earl had formerly been the Archbishop's friend, and was much moved now that it fell to his lot to pronounce the judgment of the court. He began: "Hear, my lord," but was immediately interrupted by Becket, who exclaimed, "The judgment of the court? Nay, my son; rather hear you *me*. I came here at the suit of John the Marshal, and you speak of judgment in another cause which has not been tried. Is judgment to precede trial? Moreover, when I resigned the chancellorship, wherein your lordship knows how faithfully I served his highness, I was delivered over to the Church free from every civil obligation. I did not seek my promotion, for I knew my own weakness; but the King forced advancement upon me; and his son, Prince Henry, when asked how he delivered me over to the Church, replied, 'Free from all responsibility for the past.' Thus, then, I am not bound to plead in this cause, and refuse to hear your judgment."

To this unanswerable statement the Earl attempted no reply. He felt and knew that Becket had law and justice on his side. After a few words with the Earl of Cornwall, he said that nothing more could be done without the King's special authority, and he requested the Archbishop to wait while they learned his pleasure.

"Am I then a prisoner?" said Becket.

"By St Lazar, no," replied the Earl.

"Then hear but one word more, my lord. As the soul is more worthy than the body, so are you bound to obey God rather than an earthly king. Shall the son judge or condemn

his father? Therefore do I decline to receive judgment either from the King or from yourself; the Pope alone, under God, is my judge. I place myself and my Church under his protection. I summon the bishops who have obeyed the King rather than God to answer before his tribunal; and so, protected by the Holy Catholic Church, and the power of the Apostolic see, I quit this court!"

A grander scene than this has seldom been enacted on the great stage of history. As Becket drew up his stately figure, and raised aloft his cross, he looked immeasurably superior to the crowd of nobles who pressed around him and insulted him with terms of vile abuse. In him the hero shone conspicuous; a sublime enthusiasm proved his stay and his support. He passed through their midst with a dignity which awed them into temporary silence. But in the court below he struck his foot against one of the logs of a pile of fuel, which lay in his path; and at this incident the mob recovered their powers of insult, and, headed by Ranulf de Broc, his old enemy, rained missiles upon him, and contumelious taunts, which struck still harder. Hamelin, an illegitimate brother of the King, called him "traitor." The Archbishop's old fiery nature then reasserted itself, and turning upon him, hotly—"Were I a knight," he exclaimed, "my sword should answer that foul speech!" To others of his tormentors he replied with not unnatural indignation,¹—an indignation at which some of his modern biographers profess to be sadly scandalised, as if they expected in Becket the meekness of an evangelist.²

In the courtyard he mounted his horse. One of his attendants, Peter de Morton, fortunately found the keys which unlocked the ponderous gate, and the Archbishop passed out into the open highway, to be received by the multitude with protracted shouts of exultation. With his crozier in one hand,

¹ William of Canterbury, ii. 13, 14.

² Dean Hook, ii. 43.

and with the other blessing the eager spirits who crowded round him, he rode forward, like a Roman emperor proceeding in triumph to the Capitol. With an affectation of generosity, Henry despatched a herald to make proclamation that none should touch, or in any way molest, the Archbishop; but none sought to do him injury except the partisans of the court; and he continued on his way, safe in the love of the people. "Look," he said to his priests, "what a glorious procession escorts me home from the tribunal! These are the poor of whom Christ spake, partakers of my distress; let them come in, that we may feast together." And the gates of the convent were thrown open.

After paying his devotions in the chapel, he proceeded to the refectory for some refreshment, and spent the evening in listening to his chaplain reading. Anxious to return to his own diocese, he sent the Bishops of Hereford, Worcester, and Rochester to the King to obtain a safe conduct. Nothing was more strongly desired by Henry than that Becket should fly from the kingdom; in that case he would seize his estates; but it did not suit his schemes to provide him with the royal license. He therefore answered that the Archbishop's request should be laid before the council on the day following. The reply had an ominous ring in it, and confirmed the suspicions of the Primate and his friends that his life was not safe from the violence of the royal partisans.

He therefore caused his bed to be laid behind the high altar of St Andrew's Chapel, where he was in sanctuary; but he refused to permit the monks to keep vigil with him. To three confidants only had he made known his real intention,—Brother Scailman, Robert de Cave, and Roger de Bracy,—and these he had instructed to hold four stout horses in readiness at the postern of the convent.¹ At the appointed time they quitted

¹ Herbert of Bosham.

the chapel under cover of the darkness, and made their way to the postern, mounted their horses, and through a terrible storm rode away for life, never drawing bridle until the village of Gresham was reached, where Becket obtained an hour or two's rest. Again he and his faithful companions resumed their journey, and, by spurring hard, reached Lincoln as the day dawned. Disguised as a novice, and under the name of Brother Dearman, Becket obtained a boat, and the whole party dropped down the river for forty miles to a small hermitage belonging to the monks of Sempringham. Here they lay concealed for three days to baffle their pursuers, and then made their way, travelling only by night, to Eastry, on the Kentish coast, about eight miles from Canterbury. After an interval of rest, the fugitives procured a small boat, which landed the Archbishop at Gravelines, in Flanders, on the 2d of November.

Hanging up their boat in a sequestered cove, the Archbishop and his faithful companions proceeded along the pebbly shore, falling in with a party of young men, one of whom carried a falcon on his wrist. At the sight, the Archbishop remembered his old love of hawking, and the sudden light on his countenance aroused the suspicions of one of the youths, who exclaimed, "What! are you the Archbishop of Canterbury?" Fortunately, another replied, with a contemptuous smile, "Blockhead! do you think the Archbishop travels in this fashion?" and Becket was suffered to pass. The Count of Boulogne, on whose territories he had landed, was an old enemy of his, and his spies were searching for him everywhere, his flight from England being known. It was with difficulty, therefore, that, in the coat and frock of a Cistercian monk, and assuming the name of Brother Christian, he escaped the close watch set for him. The difficulty was increased by the sudden failure of his bodily strength; but his companions succeeded in hiring a horse for one shilling, and spreading their cloaks

over his gaunt, bony ribs, they seated the Archbishop upon him, and in this style proceeded towards St Omer, where they received a most hospitable welcome from the prior and monks of the great Abbey of St Bertin.¹

Attended by an escort of three hundred knights, Becket proceeded to visit the Pope at Sens. Henry had already despatched his envoys thither, who had poured lavish bribes into the hands both of priests and lawyers, but without securing any definite encouragement from the prudent Alexander. Nor were their intrigues successful in preventing Becket's reception with all the honours due to his archiepiscopal rank. Many of the cardinals rode forth on horseback to meet him as he approached Sens; and when he entered the Papal presence, he was bidden to the seat of honour at his right hand, and permitted to remain seated while he addressed the assembly.²

Becket's narrative of the conflict which had taken place between himself and the King produced a considerable impression on the Papal conclave, which was much increased when he spread before them a roll containing the sixteen Constitutions of Clarendon. Their effect upon the privileges of the Church was immediately appreciated, and for a moment, throwing off his reserve, Alexander censured the Archbishop for having promised to observe them. A second council was held on the following day in the Pope's private chamber, and on this occasion Alexander resumed the diplomatic wariness which was natural to him. Becket, in one of those excesses of enthusiasm to which he was liable, burst forth: "With tears and groans I acknowledge that all which the English Church has suffered, it has suffered on my account. I entered the fold of Christ, not through the strait gate of canonical election, but was obtruded by the influence of the King. It was sorely against my will, and I see clearly that it was the work of man,

¹ Herbert of Bosham.

² Fitz-Stephen.



‘His companions succeeded in hiring a horse for one shilling, and spreading their cloaks over his gaunt bony ribs, they seated the Archbishop upon him, and in this style proceeded towards St. Omer.’—WARRIOR, PRIEST, AND STATESMAN, page 102.

and not of God. No marvel, therefore, that it has ended in sorrow. Yet if, as my fellow-prelates besought me, I had resigned my charge into the royal hands, should I not have set a dangerous example of submitting to the will of princes? For this reason I withheld my resignation until I should come into this sacred presence. I acknowledge my uncanonical election, and, for fear of more grievous consequences, lest, indeed, I should lead my flock into perdition, I resign into your hands, holy pastor, the burthen of the Archbishopric of Canterbury, which I am no longer strong enough to bear." And so saying, he plucked from his finger the episcopal ring, and handed it to the Pope.

It must be admitted that this was a subtle stroke of policy ; and the Pope, clearly seeing all that it imported, thought it advisable to consult with his cardinals in private. They came to the conclusion that the resignation should be nominally accepted, and that Becket should immediately afterwards be reinstated in his see. Thus, to a certain extent, the King was checkmated, for Becket would henceforth be enabled to say that he held his see of the Pope, and not of the crown. On the other hand, it relieved Alexander from the embarrassment of attempting to place in the archbishopric a nominee of his own, a proceeding which would have brought him into direct collision with the imperious Plantagenet, or of leaving Henry at liberty to fill the vacancy at his pleasure, a step which would have trampled on the highest privileges of the Church.

On Becket's readmission to the council, the Pope, therefore, addressed him thus : " My brother," he said, " we acknowledge your devotion to the Church's cause ; it has atoned for the informal election of which you have reminded us. Receive now from my hands a new investiture, without the defects of your former title. We shall continue to support your cause, because it is the cause of the Church. But inasmuch as your previous

life has been spent in the midst of pomp and abundance, we would have you learn, in company with some of the Saviour's lowliest servants, how to subdue the flesh to the spirit. And, therefore, our brother here, the Abbot of Pontigny, will receive you into his holy monastery, where you will fare as a simple monk, and as an exile in the name, and for the sake, of Christ."

In this manner the difficulty was temporarily solved, so far as it concerned the Pope and Becket. The latter set out almost immediately for the monastery of Pontigny, whose inmates received him with joy and veneration. He hastened to adapt himself in every particular to the monastic regimen.¹ Writing to the Pope, he solicited the gift of a monk's habit which had received the holy father's blessing. It was forwarded to him without delay, accompanied by a gracious message, to the effect that the Pope had sent him a dress such as he had, and not so good as he could have wished. As Becket put it on, a monk who was standing by observed, that the Pope could not be a very clever tailor, for he had cut the cape too small and too narrow. "Perhaps," replied Becket, with a smile, "that was done on purpose. The day before yesterday, when I was attiring myself for mass, you laughed at me for projecting so much behind, and to-day, had I worn a longer cape, you would have called me a hunchback." The Archbishop was naturally tall and spare, but he was often mistaken for a stout man, the thick horse-hair shirt which he wore covering not only his body, but his arms and legs.

It was on St Andrew's Day, 1164, that Becket arrived at Pontigny, and for nearly two years he remained in its tranquil shades. The retirement in many respects had a beneficial effect on his character, and weaned him from the lust of pomp

¹ The details of Becket's life at Pontigny we owe to his attendant, Roger of Pontigny, one of the monks, who has left behind him a simple but interesting narrative.

and show which had hitherto been one of his weaknesses. Desirous in all things to conform to the ideal which he had set up before him of a devoted servant of God, he adopted the utmost asceticism of life. His fare was that of the humblest monks, gruel and pulse ; a portion of his time was given up to monastic labour ; the mornings he devoted to the study of Scripture ; long hours of the night were occupied in prayer ; and frequently he would move his chaplain, Robert of Morton, to apply the lash to his bared back ; and when, spent with fatigue, the chaplain held his hand, he looked down from his work to see the Primate rolling in his sackcloth, covered with vermin, on the floor.

Arduously and anxiously did Becket struggle to subdue his natural longings after a rich and splendid living. Yet from the records of his biographers it is evident that the flesh occasionally proved too strong for the spirit, and the man triumphed over the monk. Thus we find John, Bishop of Poitiers, one of his truest friends, remonstrating with him earnestly :¹

“It will be needful for your lordship, so far as one can judge from the present aspect of your affairs, to husband your resources in every possible way, and to show your enemies that you are prepared for whatever sufferings your exile may entail upon you. For this reason I have often appealed to your discretion, and must continue to press you earnestly, that you dispense with all superfluous encumbrances, and consider the evil of the time, which promises you neither a speedy nor an easy return. Your wisdom will teach you that none will think the less of your lordship if, in conformity to your circumstances, and in condescension to the religious house that entertains you, you content yourself with only a limited establishment of horses and men, such as your necessities require.”

It would seem, too, that on one occasion his generous host, the Abbot of Pontigny, was provoked into administering to him a severe rebuke. Becket, in an excited mood, had been shedding tears, and to the abbot's expostulations with him for

¹ William of Canterbury, ed. Giles, ii. 18.

his weakness, had replied that the Lord, in a vision of the night, had showed him the manner of his end (*finisque modum*), and that he would not be able to escape the sword of martyrdom. The abbot, with a sly smile, answered, "What! *you* die a martyr? How should one who eats and drinks as you do perish by martyrdom? The cup of wine which you drink and the cup of martyrdom do but ill agree!" Becket felt the justice of the reproof, and said, "I confess that I indulge in these carnal pleasures; yet the good Lord, who purified the wicked, has deigned to reveal the mystery to me, unworthy."¹

It is certain, however, that, after one of these relapses, Becket punished himself by a more rigorous asceticism, and a more arduous penance.

Meanwhile the Pope was earnestly labouring to effect a reconciliation between the Archbishop and the King, though the conduct of neither offered any encouragement for his labours. The warmest apologists of Henry can hardly justify the meanly tyrannical actions to which, in his hatred of his former friend, he condescended to resort. The candid defender of Becket must acknowledge that he did not place a sufficient restraint on his naturally impetuous disposition. Yet it must be owned that he had much to endure. His suffragans were forbidden to communicate with him by letter, or to name him in their public prayers. Those of his friends who were supposed to be wealthy were mulcted in heavy fines, and in default of payment flung into prison. And—severest blow of all to a man who really felt a genuine sympathy with the poor—his relations, clerks, dependants, and servants were banished from England in mid-winter; were driven, four hundred in number, to seek shelter in France; and, men and women, old and young, were forced to beg their way from town to town and village to village, to seek the protection of

¹ Epistolæ Scti. Thomæ, ed. Giles, i. 314, 315.

the Archbishop at Pontigny, where, through the generosity of the French King, he did indeed procure for them the necessaries of life.

It is no marvel that, under these circumstances, Becket determined on launching the thunders of the Church at his persecutor, and he prepared to excommunicate Henry, and place the kingdom under an interdict. But the Pope was unwilling to be brought into open conflict with the King ; and, in pursuit of the prudent and temporising policy he had from the first adopted, he solicited Becket to postpone for a while his threatened fulminations.

“ Since,” he wrote, “ since we live in evil days, when, from the temper of the times, many things must be endured of which we do not approve, we appeal to your good sense, and we beg, we admonish, we advise, we entreat you to act cautiously and prudently and circumspectly in all things, whether concerning your own cause or the cause of the Church ; and while doing nothing rashly or hastily, to use every endeavour, so that you do not sacrifice the liberties of the Church and the dignity of your office, to conciliate his majesty the King of England. Until Easter, therefore, you must bear patiently with the said King, and refrain from all proceedings against his person or territories. By that time the Lord will have vouchsafed to us better days, and you as well as we may safely adopt more rigorous measures.”

Until Easter Becket waited ; but when the holy season came, he proceeded to carry into execution, without consulting his friends, the threats which had too long remained inoperative. To gird himself for the battle he made a pilgrimage to Sorreno, and offered up his prayers at the three celebrated altars of the Virgin Mary, Gregory the Great, and St Drausius, the latter being that most glorious confessor, says John of Salisbury, who, in the belief of Francis of Lorraine, imparts an

assurance of victory to all who watch a night before his shrine. He then proceeded to the important town of Vezelay, on the frontiers of Burgundy and Nivernois, and entering its grand and spacious Norman cathedral on the great feast-day of the Ascension,¹ he addressed to the awe-struck crowds an eloquent narrative of the wrongs he had suffered at the hands of Henry II., and then fulminated his excommunications—against John of Oxford, “for having usurped to himself the deanery of the church of Salisbury against the commands of his lordship the Pope,” and for various causes; against Richard of Ilchester, Archdeacon of Poitiers, and Richard de Lucy, the Great Justiciary, Jocelyn of Baliol, Raoul de Broc, Thomas Fitz-Bernard, Hugh de St Clair, “together with all who for the future should put their hands against the goods and property of the Church of Canterbury, or injure or interfere with those for whose necessities they have been set apart.” Further, he suspended the Bishop of Salisbury, for having instituted John of Oxford into his deanery. He anathematised six of the Constitutions of Clarendon, and absolved the bishops from the oath they had taken to observe them.

Becket had intended also to excommunicate the King; but either his courage failed him, or, which is more probable, he resolved to await in the first place the effect of his bold proceedings on the royal mind.

Henry, suspecting Becket's design,—which, in truth, the Archbishop in his letters to the King had not obscurely intimated,—had already sent envoys to Pontigny, to lodge an appeal to the Pope. If an appeal were made before the deed was done, the deed itself would be invalid; but it was still in effect, until officially reversed, if the appeal were *ex post facto*.² Becket, however, took care to prevent the appeal being served

¹ This is the date given by Diceto.

² Dean Hook's “Archbishops of Canterbury,” ii. 453.

upon him, and the validity of the excommunication, therefore, was maintained by the Archbishop's partisans.

When the intelligence reached England, the King burst into a passion of wrath, so that no one dared to name Becket in his presence. Soon after, on some trivial subject, his fury broke loose; he flung away his cap, ungirt his belt, stripped off his clothes, tore the silken coverlet from his bed, and crouching among the rushes that covered the floor, gnawed them with his teeth. He ordered the English ports to be guarded against the threatened interdict, and decreed that any one who should be apprehended as its bearer, if a regular, should lose his feet; if a clerk, his eyes, and suffer more shameful mutilation; if a layman, he was to be hanged; if a leper, to be burned. A bishop who left the kingdom from fear of the interdict might take nothing with him but his pastoral staff. All exiles were to return on pain of losing their benefices. Priests who refused to chant the service were to undergo mutilation, and all rebels to forfeit their lands. And the sheriff administered an oath to all adults, binding them to respect no ecclesiastical censure from the Archbishop.¹

Not content with these stringent enactments, Henry determined upon striking a personal blow at Becket, and he intimated to the Abbot of Pontigny, that if he continued to provide the Archbishop with an asylum, he would confiscate all the property of the Cistercians in England. Becket relieved the monks from their difficulty by withdrawing to Sens, where Archbishop William, one of his warmest partisans, joyfully received him, and he was provided with suitable lodgings in a monastery outside the city.

In support of the King, the English bishops addressed a strong letter of remonstrance to the Archbishop, which was probably penned by Gilbert Folliot, Bishop of London, and

¹ Dean Milman's "History of Latin Christianity," v. 82.

was couched in a tone of bitter sarcasm. They had heard, they said, that in his exile he had given up his whole attention to prayer and study, and had devoted himself to redeem, with fasting, vigils, and tears, the time which he had lost ; and that, devoted to these spiritual occupations, he was ascending, through the blessed grades of a holy life, to the summit of Christian perfection. Great was their regret, therefore, to find that he had sent a letter of commination to his lord the King, in which he had omitted the usual salutation, and in the severest terms had threatened to launch an interdict against him, and cut him off at once from the communion of the Church.

Prudence, they continued, was a holy virtue, looked carefully to the probable issue of every scheme, and was ever cautious to conclude successfully what had been commenced sagaciously. They therefore prayed him in his discretion to consider what would be the result of his measures, and whether, by such a course, he would obtain the desired end. "For ourselves," said these meek prelates, "we confess that it has cast us down from great hopes ; all our expectations of peace have vanished ; we are driven back from their very threshold by a sombre feeling of despair ; and now that war is to be waged, as it were, with drawn swords, a place can no longer be found for intercession. Therefore we counsel you as our father, with love unfeigned, not to persist in adding labour to labour, and injury to injury ; but, putting aside menace, to wait in patience and humility. Commit your cause to the mercy of God, and the condescending kindness of our lord the King. By so doing, you will heap coals of fire on many heads ; a kindlier feeling will in this manner be restored ; and what threats could never extort, humble piety may obtain. Better were it to enjoy the admiration of all for voluntary poverty, than to receive the imputation of ingratitude."¹

¹ *Epistolæ Folliot*, 436, ed. Giles, vi. 185.

To address such an epistle as this to the impetuous Becket was to pour oil upon fire. He retorted in a letter whose length precludes us from quoting it, but which contains so many characteristic passages that we cannot wholly omit a reference to it:—

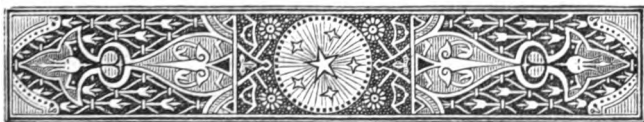
“Your joint letter,” he says, “my brethren, which has just reached us, but which we cannot easily believe to have proceeded from your joint wisdom, has filled us with astonishment. Its contents seem to savour more of irony than of consolation; and I would that they had been inspired by pious zeal and charitable feeling rather than by the suggestions of the will. Charity seeks not that which is its own, but Jesus Christ’s. It was the duty of those in your office, so says the Gospel, if you would rightly discharge the functions and faithfully fulfil the mission of Him whose likeness you bear, rather to fear Him who is able to cast both body and soul into hell, than him who can kill the body only; to obey God rather than man, our Father rather than our master; following the example of Him who became obedient to the Father, even unto death. He died for us, leaving us an example that we may follow His steps. It is ours, then, to die with Him, to lay down our lives in redeeming His Church from the yoke of slavery and the oppressions of him who grieves her,—the Church, which He hath founded, whose liberty He procured with His own blood; lest, if we act otherwise, we deservedly incur that evangelical censure: ‘He who loves his own soul more than Me, is not worthy of Me.’ You ought to have well known that if what your ruler commands is just, you are bound to obey his will; if unjust, to answer, ‘We must obey God rather than man.’ One thing I have to say to you, if I may say it without offending you: I have long kept silence, waiting if perchance the Lord should so inspire you, that you should again take courage, after you had once turned your backs in the day of battle; that even

one only of you would go up against the enemy, and present himself as a wall of defence for the house of Israel, even if he only made a show of contending against those who do not cease daily to reproach the army of the Lord.' . . .

After a vigorous defence of his conduct, he proceeds:—"You say that the King raised me to a post of honour from a mean estate. I am not sprung, indeed, from royal ancestors; but I would rather be the man to whom nobility of mind gives the advantages of birth, than one in whom a noble ancestry degenerates. It is true that I was born beneath a humble roof; but, by the mercy of God, who knoweth how to deal graciously with His servants, who chooseth the humble to confound the brave, my way of life, even in my lowly condition, and before I entered God's service, was sufficiently easy and sufficiently honourable, as you yourselves know, and equal to that of the best among my neighbours and acquaintances, whosoever they might be.

"David also was taken from the goats to become the ruler of God's people, and exalted by his courage and glory because he walked in the ways of the Lord. Peter was taken from fishing to become the head of the Church; and, by shedding his blood for Christ, he was thought worthy to receive a crown in heaven, a name of honour upon earth. I pray that we also may do likewise, for we are the successors of St Peter, not of Augustus. God knows with what earnestness the King himself willed my promotion. Let him consult his own intentions,—they will best answer him; and we, too, will respond to the requirements of our duty more faithfully, by God's mercy, in our severity, than is done by those who flatter him with falsehood. Far better are the stripes of a friend than the deceitful embraces of an enemy."¹

¹ Giles's "*Life and Letters of Thomas à Becket*," i. 347-376. The whole of this letter is well worth perusal, and gives one a high idea of Becket's ability and enthusiasm.



CHAPTER V.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

BOTH parties to the great quarrel now appealed to the Pope: Henry and the English prelates on the one hand; Thomas à Becket on the other. The Pope's secret sympathies we can well imagine to have been with the latter, for in his crusade against Frederick Barbarossa, he was acting on the same principles as Becket in his opposition to Henry II. But in the Emperor he had an opponent who taxed all his resources, and he was unwilling, therefore, to adopt any precipitate course which might arouse the enmity of the King of England, an enemy only less formidable than Barbarossa. As Dean Hook points out, he was under great obligations to Henry, who had maintained his cause in opposition to that of Pope Victor IV., even when the French King was wavering in his allegiance; and yet he was aware that Henry was quite capable of transferring his papal affections to Pope Paschal, if Alexander took a decided part against him. No less a person than the Bishop of London, representing the English hierarchy, had, in respectful though significant terms, hinted the possibility of such a proceeding; and the envoys of the English King at the Diet of Warzburg had caused it to be supposed throughout Europe that the thing possible had become a probability.

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The Pope, by this conjunction of circumstances, was forced into the adoption of a temporising policy, which, as it applied equally to both parties, satisfied neither. He was greatly besieged, and perhaps influenced, by the embassies which Henry despatched to him, and by the letters which poured in daily from Becket and the French King. The Archbishop, in his letters, dwelt largely on all the cruelties of Henry II., whom he described as a malignant tyrant, and full of malice. He declared that he was *ipso facto* excommunicate, because he had imprisoned one of Becket's chaplains, and by so doing had violated the sacred person of a clerk. He denounced the arrogance, presumption, and disobedience of Folliot, who had usurped to himself the functions of a primate, and warned the Pope against the stratagems of John of Oxford. The latter, on the part of the King, protested that nothing contrary to the privileges of the Church or the interests of Pope Alexander had been done at Warzburg; and he surrendered the arch-deaconry of Salisbury into the hands of the Pope, receiving it back again. More vast sums of English gold were expended in promoting Alexander's cause, and bribing some of the great Italian families to remain in their allegiance to him. At length he was induced to appoint a commission, with the view of effecting a reconciliation between Becket and Henry. It consisted of two members, William of Pavia, and Otho, Cardinal of St Nicholas, who were despatched to Normandy with the authority of legates *à latere*. As William of Pavia was a personal friend of the Bishop of London, the commission could not be considered as fairly constituted. Becket remonstrated strongly against it,¹ accusing Alexander of neglecting his duty, and reminding him that but for Becket's loyalty the authority

¹ Of the two cardinals, he wrote to the Archbishop of Mentz, that the one was weak and versatile, the other treacherous and empty. Giles, iii. 235; John of Salisbury, p. 539.

of the Church would have wholly ceased in England. His remonstrance was not altogether fruitless. The commission to the legates was modified, and they were directed to act as mediators rather than judges. As a concession to the King, however, they were allowed to prohibit Becket from issuing any excommunication or interdict¹ for a year from the conclusion of their mission. The effect of these modifications the reader can foresee: they neither mollified Henry nor satisfied Becket. The Pope was in the common position of a man who would fain serve two masters, and who, by his half-hearted service, disgusted both.

The legates, travelling slowly and with much pomp, arrived in France in the autumn of 1167. They first visited Becket at Sens, and afterwards King Henry at Rouen. "Here," says Becket's biographer,² "they remained some time, without re-

¹ An interdict was a terrible weapon until it got blunted by the effect of time. It literally cast into mourning the town or country against which it was levelled, and darkened the dearest scenes of social life as with a dreary cloud. Its principal features are well presented in the following sonnet:—

"Realms quake by terrors; proud arbitress of grace,
The Church, by mandate shadowing forth the power
She arrogates o'er heaven's eternal door,
Closes the gates of every sacred place.
Straight from the sun and tainted air's embrace
All sacred things are covered; cheerful morn
Grows sad as night; no seemly garb is worn,
Nor is a face allowed to meet a face
With natural smiles of greeting. Bells are dumb;
Ditches are graves—funereal rites denied;
And in the churchyard he must take his bride
Who dares be wedded! Fancies thickly come
Into the pensive heart ill fortified,
And comfortless despairs the soul benumb."

—WORDSWORTH, *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, xxxvi.

The most signal instance of an interdict in English history is that which marked the reign of John. It was declared by Pope Innocent III., on the 23d of March 1208, and not removed until the 6th of December 1213.

² Herbert of Bosham, iv. 22.

turning to us, or giving us any information of their proceedings. For Henry, as was reported, and as the event proved, sought only to protract the time ; and though he pretended he was desirous of effecting a reconciliation, the cardinals had repeated interviews without any positive result. At last, that their errand might not be wholly bootless, they summoned us to a conference at a place on the borders of France and Normandy, between the towns of Trie and Gisors."

What took place at this interview may best be told in Becket's own language :¹

"The legates summoned us to a conference on the frontiers at the end of two days, when, to speak truly, we had only three horses in our stables. We contrived to gain another week on the plea that we wished to assemble together our brothers in exile, who were grievously dispersed in all directions, to comfort us by their company on the way, and by their advice in the conference.

"After much difficulty in gathering funds for our journey on so short a notice, they joined us, and we met the legates on the Octave of St Martin's (November 23), between Gisors and Trie, where we were all most sumptuously entertained at the expense of the French King, who had appointed commissioners for that purpose.

"The cardinals began by reminding us of the King's inflexible character, the wickedness of the times, the necessities and sufferings of the Church, which is assailed by enemies in every country but France, and shaken by storms which she can hardly withstand. Much did they say, too, respecting the King's power and greatness, and the love and honour in which he held the Roman Church, the friendship and favour he had bestowed upon ourself ; while, on the other hand, they exaggerated greatly the causes of complaint against us, and asserted

¹ Becket to Pope Alexander, *Epist.*, ed. Giles, iii. 21, etc.

that we had involved him in a war with the King of France and the Earl of Flanders. They besought us to be humble, and, by a show of moderation, to appease, if possible, his anger ; if, indeed, such ferocity as his *can* be appeased, or such unrestrained severity be mitigated ! They also entreated us, as we so thoroughly understood his character, to tell them the best way of placating him. For he had also treated them roughly when he discovered they were not empowered to pass sentence upon us, as John of Oxford's promises had led him to expect.

“ Giving thanks to your Excellency for the regard you had shown for the peace both of ourself and of the Church, we proceeded to dispel the suspicions which the King sought to fasten upon us, by solid and unanswerable arguments ; and, on the following day, the French King, in the presence of the cardinals, made oath that we were innocent of the disloyalty with which we had been charged. . . .

“ We next proceeded to answer readily the King of England in the way that your legates wished, promising that we should show him obedience and service in all humility and devotion, because he is our king and lord, saving always the honour of God and the Apostolic See, the liberty of the Church, the honour due to our own person, and the possessions of the churches. And if anything ought to be added, or any reservation or alteration made in this profession, we requested that they would inform us of it, because it was our wish to obey them so far as the law of our order and vows would permit. Then they replied that on this head they had no definite instructions ; that they were come, not to advise, but to counsel us ; and they asked us temptingly,—inasmuch as, according to the words of my lord William, we are not better than our forefathers,—whether we would promise to observe towards him all the customs which our predecessors had observed towards

us, whereby an end would be put to this contention, the King would receive us into favour, and allow us to return to our provinces.

“To this we answered, that no one of our predecessors had been compelled to make any such promise to any of his ; nor would we, by God’s grace, ever pledge ourselves to the observance of such usages, from which your Holiness, in the presence of themselves and many others, so mercifully absolved us at Sens ; adding, in a manner becoming a successor of the Apostles,—what we pray God ever to preserve in our memory,—that rather ought we to submit our neck to the executioner than become a party to such perversities, and for base traffic of temporal advantages, or from the love of life, to abandon the pastoral care. The infamous Constitutions of Clarendon were then read in their presence ; some of them we, or rather the Holy Church, had already condemned, together with those persons who had upheld them in many a public council. We asked, not whether it was *lawful* to observe them, but whether a priest might dissemble on such a subject without danger of his orders and peril of his salvation ? And we added, that we had sworn fidelity to the King *saving our order*, and that we would faithfully keep our oath so long as it did not infringe on our allegiance to God. Thereupon, one [Folliot, Bishop of London] whom, as your Highness knows, we have long suspected, and do still most rightfully suspect, intimated that perhaps it were better we should withdraw altogether than that the Church of God should be vexed so grievously. We answered that, by withdrawing, we should set an example fatal to the liberty of the Church, and, it might be, jeopardise the Christian faith itself ; for if other shepherds similarly withdrew, who would rise up and oppose himself, like unto a wall, for the house of Israel ?

“We added, that neither your Holiness, nor your Apostolic

predecessors, had so instructed the Church by your example.

"They proceeded to a third question, 'Would we acknowledge them, the legates, as judges in the case of appeal made against us by our bishops?' We replied that, on this point, your Holiness had given us no instructions, and that our poverty ill suited with a costly litigation.

"It was the object of our adversaries, as we learn from persons who can hardly be mistaken, to seek an occasion of stigmatising us in the presence of the legates, and so, by one means or another, to injure our cause. It was believed that none of our countrymen would dare to espouse our party against the King, and that thus our ruin would be easily effected. The King has summoned those only who have been our adversaries from the beginning of our troubles, and who, in truth, are well known to be their authors; namely, the Archbishop of York, and the Bishops of London and Chichester, with whom the Bishop of Worcester is associated to blind the eyes of men. Yet, as your Holiness in your wisdom will not fail to remember, these persons who are now the loudest on the King's side, and who, as all the world knows, thirst after our blood, on a former occasion, when they made petition to your Holiness for our *pallium*, and for the confirmation of our election, used very different language. But now, in contradiction of themselves, and in violation of the truth, they have exposed themselves to contempt for their falsehood and adulation, saying *yea* and *nay* at the King's bidding, like the slave in the comedy."

After a bitter denunciation of his persecutors, he continues:—

"Though the Church and myself may hope good things from one of the legates, yet in no one but your Holiness can we fully trust. May God turn the heart of the other legate [William of

Pavia], and make him what may be best for his own salvation, and most fitting for a cardinal of the Holy Roman Church! Much do we fear that his timorous character and pliability may lead him to exert his authority too much in union with the power and perverseness of the English King, and that such propositions may be placed before us as we could not hearken to without offence, nor grant without disobeying God and wronging the whole world. . . .

“To sum up, then, all that has been said in one lamentable conclusion, we ask you to consider whether these are the due fruits of our labour and our exile,—that we are to submit to judgment while we are plundered of our property, and to incur all the anxiety of litigation because we dared to defend the liberties of the Church against its oppressor; whereas we had expected daily to receive comfort out of our desolation, joy from the termination of our miseries, and vengeance on the foes of the Church, from God and from you, after the injuries which Christ has suffered. Arise, O God, and judge Thy cause; avenge the blood of Thy servants, who have sinfully been slain, and of others too, who faint under their insupportable afflictions; for there are none but our lord the Pope and a few other friends who are willing to deliver us out of the hands of our enemies.”¹

¹ In an anonymous letter addressed to the Archbishop by some friend at the French court, a graphic account is given of the King's first interview with the legates. He says the King went out to meet them near Argenton, and having saluted them cheerfully, and with much urbanity, escorted them to their lodgings. Next day, after mass, they were invited at an early hour to wait on the King. After having been closeted with him for about two hours, they came forth, and the King followed them as far as the outer door of the chapel, when he turned round, and exclaimed in their hearing, “*I hope to God I may never again set eyes on a cardinal!*” The French King was a loyal friend to Becket, who had obtained great influence over him, as he did over all with whom he came into close contact.

Such is Becket's account of the interview, and it is confirmed in all its main points by other authorities. At the close, we are told, King Henry, with many tears, besought the legates to relieve him of his troublesome Archbishop, a man whom he could neither bend nor break. The spectacle of a weeping monarch has different effects upon different minds. William of Pavia was so smitten with sympathy that he also yielded to the "melting mood ;" Cardinal Otho was made of sterner stuff, and, with all his courtesy, could scarcely repress his laughter. Then they departed, leaving the quarrel between Henry and Becket to blaze as fiercely as before. At Le Mans the English bishops again renewed their appeal, enforcing it by a letter, in which they complained, with astonishing hypocrisy, that Becket had left them exposed to the royal wrath, "to death, and the effusion of blood," while himself taking refuge in a secure asylum ; and they accused him of violating all justice and the several canons in suspending and anathematising the clergy without hearing and without trial.

On receiving this appeal, William of Pavia notified that it should be heard on the next St Martin's Day, and he commanded Becket to abstain from issuing excommunication or interdict until the appeal had been duly heard.

At this fresh blow, dealt by the hands of those who should have supported him, Becket addressed the Pope in a strain of mingled sorrow and indignation. He described himself as the most miserable of men, and, with the irreverence of his times, applied to himself the prophet Isaiah's description of our Lord's Passion : he was a man of sorrows, he wrote, and acquainted with grief. William of Pavia he denounced as corrupt and perjured, and hungering after the price of his blood ; and in eloquent terms he invoked the justice and support of the Pope. But Alexander, influenced by another embassy from Henry, and through the instigation of Cardinal John of

Naples, confirmed the inhibition which his legates had pronounced.¹

The struggle still continued, and Becket addressed remonstrance upon remonstrance to the Pope, as each successive ambassador of Henry returned from the Roman court with additional concessions. The position of Alexander at this time was one which we cannot contemplate without pity. He was still an exile at Benevento, and did not dare to take up his residence in the papal city. The power of Barbarossa, even after his defeat at Legnano, was formidable, and at any time he might renew his invasion of Italy. Alexander could not afford to offend so stanch an adherent as the English King, nor could he dispense with his liberal subsidies. Yet he was unwilling to give umbrage to the French King, and he felt that Becket's cause was the cause of the Church. He endeavoured, therefore, to soothe them by letters full of adulation and entreaty, in which he hinted that the concessions he had made were but for a time. "For a time!" replied the impetuous Becket, whose frank English nature had no sympathy with Italian subtlety; "yea, and in that time the Church of England sinks into irretrievable ruin; the property of the Church and of the poor is wrested from her. In that time bishoprics and abbacies are confiscated to the King's use; in that time who shall guard the flock when the wolf has entered the fold? This fatal dispensation will be a precedent for all ages. But for me and my fellow-exiles, the authority of Rome had wholly ceased in England, and no one would have espoused the cause of the Pope against the fury of kings and princes." He plainly asserts that Alexander and his cardinals were influenced not so much by policy as by venality, that they yielded to Henry's bribes, and not to his arguments. "Your gold and silver," he exclaims, "shall avail you nothing in the day of the wrath of the Lord."

¹ Giles, iv. 128.

Beset by Becket and his friends, who were both many and powerful, on the one hand, and by Henry and his partisans, whose help he could not dispense with, on the other, Alexander determined on making another effort to reconcile the two opponents. To act as mediators between them, he selected the Prior of Montdieu and Bernard de Corilo, a monk of Grammont; and a favourable opportunity for their good work presented itself in a conference on political matters which was to take place between the Kings of England and France. It was agreed that at the same time Becket and his sovereign should endeavour to define the conditions on which peace and amity might be possible; and to secure so happy a result, many of the great French and Norman prelates and nobles volunteered their services as joint mediators with the Papal commissioners.

We are inclined to believe that Henry was, as Dean Hook remarks,¹ heartily sick of the prolonged controversy in which he had been involved, and in which the sympathies of the greater part of Christendom were with his opponent. A short time before, he had declared himself willing to turn Moham-medan rather than submit to Becket; but he was wearied by the latter's courageous persistency, and prepared to make almost any concessions for the sake of peace. The Primate, on the contrary, held firmly to his great principle, the independence of the Church, believing that the best interests of his country were bound up with that independence. He was prepared to yield something; but that something, whatever it might be, must not trench upon the principle he had sworn to defend, if need were, with his blood. A proposal had been made that he should accept a translation to some other see. But Becket saw that this was to surrender all he had fought and suffered for; and he wrote to his agents:—"I

¹ Dean Hook's "*Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury*," ii. 464.

would have our lord the Pope and our other friends to know, and I desire you to impress it firmly and constantly on their minds, that I would rather die, as is known to Him who searches the hearts of men, than be torn away, while living, from the church of Canterbury. Such is the settled purpose of my mind. You may add, that were there no other cause than the despoiling of our church and of other churches in the land by the hand of *that man* (the King), I would rather, God knows, submit to any kind of death, than that I should live in dishonour, or that he should escape the punishment which, unless he repent, will be his due."

The Kings of France and England, each attended by a numerous train, met in the plains near Montmirail, on the Day of the Epiphany, January 6, 1167. Becket and the Papal commissioners were also present. They had held a long conference, and Becket had proposed, instead of the obnoxious phrase "saving my order," to substitute "saving the honour of God." But the mediators and all his friends deeming it advisable to take advantage of the King's conciliatory disposition, besought him not to introduce a fresh cause of quarrel, but to place himself in Henry's hand without condition. "It was the unanimous opinion," says Herbert of Bosham, "that he should submit the whole question to the King's will and pleasure, and so gratify his highness by giving him honour before the whole assemblage. The Archbishop hesitated; he felt that the omission of the disputed phrase was a virtual surrender of the Church's liberties; but, pressed on every side, and confused with a storm of arguments and entreaties, he became silent, and the mediators thought he was persuaded. He turned to seek the advice of his own intimate counsellors; but they too hesitated; they shrank from opposing themselves against the mediators, 'among whom were men of the highest character for piety, men of experience, and men devoted to the interests

of the Church ;' and they naturally feared to encourage him in his opposition, lest the result should fall as a burthen on their shoulders. Some indeed went so far as, in a low voice, to murmur, that in such a case it was not safe to omit all mention of God's honour and the Church's liberties for the sake of man's favour."

While this hesitation prevailed, the most influential and the friendliest of Becket's mediators, the Archbishops of Rheims, Sens, and Rouen, the King of France himself, the Carthusian Abbot of Montdieu, entreated him to be guarded in his speech, to abstain from any limitation of his concession to the King, and to avoid referring to the Constitutions of Clarendon. "What need is there," they said, "that you should mention them? You have already condemned them by your own writing, on the Pope's authority, and have absolved all who had sworn to observe them from their obligation."¹ Becket remained silent, but accompanied the prelates into the presence of the two Kings. No sooner did he see his former friend and patron than, mindful perhaps of their old intimacy, he rushed forward, and threw himself at the King's feet. Henry immediately caught him by the hand, and made him rise.

Standing erect, he began to entreat the royal mercy on the English Church, which was committed to so unworthy a sinner as himself; and after a brief recapitulation of his sufferings, he continued: "On the whole subject, therefore, which lies between us, my lord the King, I throw myself on your mercy and on your pleasure, here in presence of our lord the King of France, and of the archbishops, princes, and others who stand around us——" He paused; probably a sudden conviction came upon him that he was yielding too much, or his impetuous disposition reasserted itself; and to the surprise of the

¹ As this incident is mentioned by Herbert of Bosham alone, it was probably he who gave this pernicious counsel.

King, the mediators, and his own friends, he added the fatally significant words, which neutralised the effect of his previous submission, "SAVING THE HONOUR OF GOD!"

Henry started up in a fit of ungovernable rage. He poured out lavish reproaches on the Archbishop, accusing him of arrogance, obstinacy, and ingratitude. He condescended even to accuse him of having displayed so much splendour and munificence in his Chancellorship only to court popularity, and supplant his sovereign in the popular affection. Becket listened patiently, and without the least sign of perturbation. When the King ceased, he replied in a calm and moderate tone, calling the King of France as a witness to his unfailing loyalty, and adding, with the dignity which so well became him, that all he had done in his former office was done to promote the King's majesty and honour. "It would be degrading and unbecoming in me," he said, "to recall the advantages which I rendered by my services, or to taunt you with them; for the world saw them, and knows them to be true."

The King interrupted him fiercely, and addressing the French King, said:¹ "Hear, my lord, if you please, how foolishly and vainly this man deserted his church, though neither I nor any other person drove him out of the kingdom, but he fled away of his own accord by night; and now he tells you that his cause is that of the Church, and that he is suffering for justice' sake. I have always been willing, and I am still willing, to grant that he should rule his church with the same liberty as any of the saints his predecessors. But mark you," continued Henry, "whatever his lordship of Canterbury disapproves, he will say is contrary to God's honour, and so he will on all occasions get the advantage of me; but that I may not be thought to despise God's honour, I will put before him this proposition:—Many kings of England have there been before

¹ Herbert of Bosham, pp. 262-270.

me, some of greater power and some of less than I. Many good and holy archbishops of Canterbury have there also been before him. Now let him behave towards me as the holiest of his predecessors behaved towards the least of mine, and I am satisfied."

All present exclaimed aloud, "The King humbles himself enough!"

The French King seemed impressed by the reasoning of his royal cousin, and turning towards Becket, inquired, sarcastically, "My lord Archbishop, do you wish to be more than a saint?" A speech which, Becket's biographer tells us, gave no little pleasure to Henry and his partisans, "whose sole wish was to justify their own cause, and to disparage Becket's, in the eyes of the French King,"¹ that his support might no longer be given to the contumacious Primate.

That contumacious Primate preserved his calmness and dignity throughout the trying scene, and was neither moved by the defection of the French King, nor discouraged by the murmurs of the French prelates. "It is true," he exclaimed, "that there have been archbishops before me holier and greater than I, each one of whom extirpated some of the abuses in the Church; but if they had corrected all, I should not now be exposed to this fierce and fiery trial." To all solicitations that he would withdraw the offensive words, he returned a firm refusal. He had given up the phrase "saving his order," because the King objected to it. What was the result? He did not receive the royal favour, but suffered much more severely than before. He feared that such would be the consequence of a second concession, and stood firm in the midst

¹ It is surprising Louis did not see that Henry's cause was *his* cause, and the cause, in fact, of every independent sovereign; that, in supporting Becket against Henry, he was supporting the Church against the State.

of the entreaties of all his friends, "like a city founded upon a rock."

Night now put an end to the conference, and the two Kings rode away, without saluting the Archbishop or waiting to receive his salute. Becket retired to his lodgings slowly, attended by his clerks and chaplains, many of whom, having been nearly four years in exile, did not hesitate to express their annoyance at what they considered the fastidious and unnecessary scruples of their master. One of them, Henry de Hocton or Houghton, was riding immediately in front of Becket, when his horse made a false step and stumbled. "Come up!" he cried, "saving the honour of God and the Church and my own order!" The Archbishop heard what he said, but, though deeply grieved, remained silent.

For three days Becket rode in the train of the French King, though holding no communication with him. Even the usual daily supplies of provisions were withheld. In this strait Becket found no encouragement from his discontented followers. He was forced to rely only on his own enthusiasm; and, as he brooded over his wrongs and the wrongs of that Church with which he had now identified himself absolutely, he began to feel the impulses of a martyr stirring in his heroic heart. By the common people he was still regarded with love and admiration, as their great protector and advocate; and as he approached the town of Sens, the inhabitants came forth to meet him, shouting in honour of the man who, "for the honour of his God, had defied two kings."

The temporary agreement between Henry and Louis was soon broken up, and the latter began to feel the want of his powerful ally. With this change of circumstances came a change of views, and he and his prelates began to perceive that what they had censured as Becket's obstinacy they ought to have admired as heroic intrepidity. His praises were once more

sung at the French court. The King visited him at Sens ; and one of the Papal commissioners, Bertrand de Corils, confided to Herbert of Bosham that he had rather his foot had been cut off, than that Becket should have listened to his advice.¹

The reports addressed by Corils and his colleague to the court of Rome, and the strong representations of the French King, now inclined the balance in his favour ; and the Pope withdrew the inhibition which had prevented Becket from having recourse to his spiritual weapons. Of his new freedom the Archbishop quickly availed himself ; and on Palm Sunday, at Clairvaux, he pronounced a solemn excommunication against the Bishops of London and Salisbury, Earl Hugh, Ranulf de Broc, Richard de Lucy, Hugh de St Clair, the clerk Letard of Northflete, Nigel of Sackville, and others, the chief friends and advisers of the King. Their appeal to the Pope he treated with undisguised scorn. He announced the excommunication to the Archbishop of Rouen, and reminded him that whoever befriended any one of these outlaws of the Church by word, in meat or drink, or even by salutation, subjected himself thereby to the same condemnation. When the news reached the excommunicated parties, they took the greatest precautions to prevent the arrival of the formal letters of excommunication, and by the King's orders the ports of the kingdom were strictly guarded. The Archbishop, on his part, found it difficult to engage any person on the dangerous errand of conveying them to England. At last a young layman, named Berenger, offered himself, and successfully discharged his mission under the following romantic circumstances.²

On the festival of Ascension Day, a priest named Vitalis was officiating at the high altar of St Paul's, London, when, just as

¹ Herbert of Bosham, 278.

² Fitz-Stephen.

the choir had begun to chant the *offerenda*, and the priest had presented the bread and wine, and made ready the chalice, a stranger approached, fell on his knees, and presented to the priest what appeared to be his donation to the offertory. Astonished at the man's behaviour, Vitalis held out his hand to receive it. Then Berenger gave him the archiepiscopal missive, saying, "Neither the bishop of this diocese is present, nor the dean ; but I see you here as Christ's officiating minister, and, in the name of God and our lord the Pope, I present to you this letter from his Grace of Canterbury, containing the sentence which he has pronounced on the Bishop of London ; as also another letter to the dean of this church, enjoining upon him and his clergy a due observance of this sentence. And I forbid you, by Divine authority, to celebrate in this church after the present mass, until you have delivered to the bishop and the dean their letters."

Having spoken these words, the stranger, who was, of course, the young Berenger, disappeared amid the throng of worshippers hastening to their homes, as was usual after the Gospel had been read, for they had already heard mass in their own parish churches. A murmur spread among those, however, who were nearest to the altar, and they asked the priest whether Divine service had been prohibited in the Cathedral. On his answering in the negative, they said no more, and the Archbishop's emissary retired unmolested. The priest, meanwhile, continued the service, but the King's officials made search in all parts of the city for Berenger, and stationed guards at the entrance of every street, but without discovering him.

The reader will probably be interested in the perusal of the letter thus conveyed to Folliot:¹—

¹ Giles's "Life and Letters," ii. 186.

"To the Bishop.

"Thomas, by God's grace, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Legate of the Apostolic See, to Gilbert, Bishop of London,—would that he could say his brother,—that he may turn from evil and do good.

"Your extravagancies we have tolerated long enough; and we hope that our patience may not be as detrimental to the whole Church as it has been to ourself. You have abused our forbearance, and would listen neither to us nor to the Pope in the advice which concerned our salvation; but your obstinacy has grown worse and worse, until, from regard to our sacred duty, and to the requirements of the law, we have, for just and manifest causes, passed sentence of excommunication upon you, and cut you off from Christ's body, which is the Church, until you give due satisfaction. We therefore command you, by virtue of your obedience, and in peril of your salvation, your episcopal dignity, and priestly orders, to abstain, as the rules of the Church prescribe, from all communion with the faithful, lest, by coming in contact with you, the Lord's flock be contaminated to their ruin, whereas they ought to have been instructed by your teaching, and led by your example to everlasting life."

Folliot, on finding his excommunication thus publicly proclaimed, laboured hard to contradict its effect, declaring that, as Bishop of London, he was exempt from the jurisdiction of the Primate, and persuading many of the clergy to join him in an appeal to the Pope. Henry, too, was equally active. He had not a single chaplain who was not excommunicated, or under ban for holding intercourse with the excommunicated, and he therefore renewed his efforts to overthrow his powerful antagonist. These efforts are well summed up by Dean Milman. He continued his active intrigues, his subsidies in Italy. He bought the support of Milan, Pavia, Cremona, Parma, Bologna. The Frangipani, the family of Leo, the people of Rome, were still kept in allegiance to the Pope chiefly by his lavish payments. He made overtures to the King of Sicily, the Pope's ally, for a matrimonial alliance with his family; and, finally, he urged the tempting offer to mediate a peace between the Emperor and the Pope. Reginald of Salisbury

boasted that, if the Pope should die, Henry had the whole College of Cardinals in his pay, and could name his Pope.

But the current of events was flowing in Becket's favour. Some of the English bishops inclined towards the side of the man who had shown himself so ardent a defender of the Church. Henry of Blois, Bishop of Winchester, supplied him with money and stores. Hereford, Norwich, Chester, Worcester, and Chester shrank from countenancing the ambitious pretensions of Folliot, whose attempt to assert the independence of his see was also denounced by the leading prelates of France. The Pope, no longer dependent on Henry's assistance, came forward more boldly in the cause of Becket,—which cause was, indeed, pre-eminently his own; and resolving on the appointment of a new legatine commission, he placed upon it, not the flatterers and partisans of Henry, but two men who were known for their devotion to ecclesiastical law—Gratian, a lawyer learned in the canons; and Vivian, as a man of more pliable disposition, but, as an advocate, of the same principles (March 10, 1169).

Their first interview with the King has been graphically described by one of Becket's party. On the Eve of St Bartholomew's Day they arrived at Dampart. As they approached, Geoffrey Ridel and Nigel Sackville, two whom the Archbishop had excommunicated, stealthily quitted the town. The King, returning from the chase, paid a visit of courtesy to the legates, and was followed by the princes, who presented them with a whole stag, and did them honour with a flourish of trumpets.

On the following morning, August 24, Henry paid them a second visit, accompanied by the Bishops of Seiz and Rennes. To the conference which ensued, and which varied from peace to strife, and strife to peace, John of Oxford, Reginald of Salisbury, and the Archdeacon of Llandaff were admitted. It lasted a whole day. Just before sunset, Henry rushed out, in

one of his paroxysms of wrath, swearing by God's eyes he would take another way. Gratian replied, "Think not to threaten us, for we come from a court which is accustomed to give commands both to emperors and kings." Henry then summoned his barons and chaplains, to inform them of the fair terms he had offered, and, pleased with his own magnanimity, retired in a tranquil humour. The eighth day was appointed for the interview between him and Becket, which was to take place in the presence of the legates.

It was held at Bayeux, on the 21st August. Henry was attended by the Archbishops of Rouen and Bordeaux, the Bishop of Worcester, and the Norman bishops; Becket by his friends and clerks. No definite resolution being come to, a second meeting took place on the day following, at a place called Le Bar, when the King demanded, as a preliminary, that the legates should absolve his chaplains without oath; and on their refusal, mounted his horse, and swore that he never again would listen to any one who interceded for Becket's restoration. The bishops succeeded in pacifying him; the legates quietly yielded; and Henry, renewing the conference, assented to the return of Becket and all the exiles. On the other hand, Geoffrey Ridel and Nigel Sackville were absolved, upon their solemnly undertaking to obey the commands of the legates. The King requested one of the legates, or a person commissioned by them, to cross over to England, and absolve all who had been excommunicated by Becket. At first the legates refused, but after much wrangling, the yielding Vivian consented. The bishops were then ordered to set down in writing the terms of reconciliation, the King ordering them to insert a clause, "Saving the honour of his crown." This fresh condition ended all that so far had been accomplished, and the conference was adjourned to a further day at Caen, where, as well as at Rouen, all attempts to reconcile the two

antagonists proved fruitless. The King insisted on the words, "Saving the dignity of my crown ;" Becket was resolute to add, "Saving the liberty of the Church."¹

Both parties now renewed their appeals to Rome. Henry resorted to his bribes, and Becket recurred to his excommunications. Gratian, before he quitted France, reminded Ridel and Sackville that their absolution was only conditional, and that unless peace was concluded between the King and the Primate before Michaelmas, they were still under the ban. Becket then resolved on a measure of the most decisive character. He wrote to the English bishops, commanding them to lay the kingdom under an interdict, and to cease from all sacred offices, except baptism, penance, and the viaticum, unless before the Feast of Purification the King did justice to the Church (November 1169).

Henry was now thoroughly alarmed. He feared that all the bishops, except, indeed, those of London and Salisbury, might be induced to publish the dreaded interdict in their dioceses ; and he feared, moreover, lest it should be extended to his continental territories, and the excommunication fulminated against himself, in which case the Norman prelates might throw off their allegiance. In such straits he could not do better than implore the assistance of St Denys ; and for this purpose he repaired to his shrine at Montmartre, the Martyr's Mount, near Paris. Here he invited Vivian to meet him, and he easily prevailed on the boastful and pliable councillor to undertake a negotiation with Becket. The latter, though mistrusting Vivian, agreed, at the latter's request, to approach as near as Chateau Corbeil.

Once more the King of France, his prelates, and nobles, co-operated with the Papal legate in the difficult task of re-establishing concord between two men of absolutely opposite

¹ *Epistolæ*, ed. Giles, iv. 216.

principles and character. Many conferences took place, and on each side impracticable propositions were advanced. But at last, says Becket's biographer,¹ all difficulties seemed cleared away, and every preliminary adjusted. All the objectionable constitutions were virtually withdrawn by the King, and the troublesome phrase, "Saving the honour of God," was tacitly suppressed by the Archbishop. There was no longer exhibited any desire to subject the Archbishop, in ecclesiastical matters, to the royal will. Henry made this stipulation only, that the Archbishop should return to England,—from which he denied that he had ever expelled him,—and there discharge his metropolitan duties in all respects as before, submitting to the royal customs and prerogatives; and that he should not, under pretext that it belonged to the Church, usurp aught that belonged to the crown; nor would the King, under cover of the royal prerogative, claim any privilege of the Church.

But the Archbishop, continues his biographer, demanded compensation for the property of which he and his followers had been deprived, urging both upon the clergy and laity who were present the obligatory force of that Divine precept by which restitution is required before absolution can be obtained. He added, that it was unworthy the royal magnificence to confiscate to its own use the goods of the poor and of the Church, and equally unlawful for the King to make grants of lands that were not his own. Such deeds were tantamount to making an offering at one altar out of the plunder of another, or it was just as if Paul were crucified to redeem Peter. The amount of which he and his clergy had been deprived Becket valued at thirty thousand marks (£20,000).

Both Louis and the mediators were opposed to these pecuniary claims, and argued that they ought not to stand in the way of a reconciliation which was so advisable for the sake of

¹ Herbert of Bosham.

both the kingdom and the Church. They reminded Becket of the old friendship that had subsisted between the King and himself, and hinted that a just and devout pastor would not persist, if every other obstacle were removed, in urging pecuniary considerations which might prove a stumbling-block in the path of peace. They consented, however, to speak to Henry on the subject, and Henry, who was not an avaricious man, readily promised that when the amount in which he was really indebted to the See of Canterbury had been estimated by his procurators, he would make such restitution as his ministers advised.¹

Thus every storm seemed to have blown over, and the haven of concord and reconciliation seemed in sight, when Becket, apparently by the advice of the mediators, demanded some guarantee that the conditions would be observed. Not, he said, because he suspected the King of treachery, but because he naturally entertained apprehensions of some of the courtiers, who had notoriously manifested a spirit of ill-will towards him; and therefore he wished that an outward sign or token of peace should be exchanged between them. The Pope had already advised Becket to insist on the *osculum pacis*, or kiss of peace, from the King, without which neither his life nor liberty would be esteemed secure. And there can be no question that, from a monarch so capricious as Henry—surrounded, as he was, by knights and men-at-arms capable of executing the most atrocious deeds—Becket was fully justified in demanding the solemn pledge of safety.

Through the mediators and King Louis, Becket's request was communicated to Henry, who replied, that he would have been very willing to grant the *osculum pacis*, had he not at one time publicly made oath that he would never kiss the Archbishop, even though he should be persuaded to restore him to

¹ Herbert of Bosham.

his favour. As he was unwilling to break his oath, he must refuse the *osculum pacis*.

Louis and the mediators took alarm at this reluctance of the King's, suspecting that, under the "honied words" which had passed between them, they had perhaps been unwittingly drinking poison. In hot haste they returned to the Archbishop, who was waiting in the Chapel of the Martyrs, and reported the King's answer. Becket immediately saw his danger, and peremptorily refused to make peace with Henry, unless, as the Pope had advised, the reconciliation was ratified by the kiss of peace.¹ The conference was broken up. Henry rode away by night to his lodgings at Nantes, cursing and swearing like a true Plantagenet; while Becket and his followers retired to a house of the Templars, situated just outside the walls of Paris.

Furious at his disappointment, and apprehending that the Archbishop would at once launch an interdict against him, Henry despatched Geoffrey Ridel, Archdeacon of Canterbury, to England with a royal proclamation of the most rigorous character. It declared that any person conveying into the realm letters from the Pope or Archbishop of Canterbury was guilty of high treason; that whosoever, bishop, clerk, or layman, observed the interdict, should be ejected from all his chattels, which were confiscate to the crown; that all clerks absent from England should return before the Feast of St Hilary, on pain of forfeiture of their revenues; that no appeal should be made to the Pope or Archbishop of Canterbury, under penalty of imprisonment and forfeiture of all chattels; that all laymen from beyond the seas were to be searched, and if anything

¹ Dean Hook is strangely in error in his account of this remarkable transaction. He represents Becket as offering the *osculum*, and accompanying it with the objectionable words, "I kiss you to the honour of God."

should be found upon them contrary to the King's honour, they were to be imprisoned, and the same should be the punishment of those who, under like conditions, crossed to the Continent; that any clerk or monk landing in England without passport from the King, or with anything contrary to his honour, should be thrown into prison; that no clerk or monk might cross the seas without the royal passport, and that all Welsh monks and clerks should be expelled from English schools; that the sheriffs were to administer an oath to all freemen throughout England, in open court, binding them to obey the royal mandate, and abjuring all obedience to Thomas Archbishop of Canterbury; and lastly, that the ecclesiastical tax called Peter's Pence should no longer be paid to Rome, but into the royal exchequer.¹

This was a significantly strenuous vindication of the royal authority, and yet so great was the influence of Becket, that it did not prove altogether successful. It was a declaration of war, but it did not ensure the success of the campaign. The bishops, with the exception of Folliot, declined to take the oath; while Becket addressed a letter to the people of England, warning them against the consequences of abjuring their pastor, and offering absolution to all who had taken the oath under compulsion, and repented of it. Henry then resolved on another blow. The coronation of the King of England was the "undoubted prerogative" of the See of Canterbury; but Henry, who was desirous for many reasons that his eldest son should be crowned as his future successor, determined that the ceremony should be performed by the Archbishop of York, and despatched John of Oxford to Rome to obtain at any cost the Papal sanction to this innovation. Whether that sanction was really obtained is a moot question, for the Papal brief which

¹ A copy of the proclamation, *in extenso*, will be found in the Appendix to Lord Lyttleton's "History of England under Henry II."

the Archbishop of York afterwards produced as his authority has been declared by Dr Lingard to be a forgery.¹ At all events, the anger of Becket was unbounded, and he denounced, in no measured terms, the venality and profligacy of the Roman court.

The coronation of the prince took place at Westminster on the 18th of June, and, as Dean Milman remarks, the estrangement of the King and Primate seemed now complete, the reconciliation more remote than ever. The Pope had appointed a fourth commission, consisting of the Archbishop of Rouen and the Bishop of Nevers, to whom was added Becket's friend, the Archbishop of Sens, as *amicus curiæ*; but in the face of so many difficulties they were unwilling to act. To all appearance, so long as Becket or Henry lived, the quarrel would endure. Yet at this very moment a sudden change in the policy of the King took all the world by surprise, and led to the long-deferred reconciliation. Its causes were probably manifold; but the principal we take to be the more decided interference of the Pope on behalf of Becket, Henry's consequent dread of an interdict,² and a conviction, suggested by some one of the royal advisers, that Becket would be less powerful, and, consequently, less dangerous, *within* than *without* the realm.³ In France he was regarded almost as a saint, and, from the King to the peasant, all classes revered and supported him. In England, the heart of the populace was with

¹ The truth would seem to be that the brief was authentic, but had been granted a twelvemonth previously, and afterwards, in 1170, revoked by two inhibitory letters (dated February 26 and April 7, 1170), which are still extant in the Bodleian MSS.

² The Pope privately authorised Becket to proclaim and put in force an interdict, if Henry refused to come to terms. This concession apparently was unknown to the Papal commissioners.

³ Fitz-Stephen.

him, but many of the clergy and most of the nobles espoused the cause of the King.

Henry and Louis had agreed upon an interview, to take place at Fretteville, between Chartres and Tours. At the earnest request of the Archbishop of Sens, Becket repaired to the same locality. Some days afterwards (June 22, 1170), through the offices of the same Archbishop and the two Papal commissioners, a meeting was arranged between him and his sovereign. Both seem to have come to it actuated by a sincere desire to settle their differences, and both refrained from putting forward pretensions unpalatable to the other. The details of this famous peace are quaintly recorded by Herbert of Bosham :—

“We were summoned,” he says, “to attend at a meeting which was to take place between the Kings, and we went thither accordingly. On the third day of the conference the business of the two Kings was ended, and they immediately began to consider how we and King Henry might be reconciled. The King of France departed, not wishing to be present in the business, but we were committed to the protection of certain nobles of his kingdom, who were ordered to mediate in our favour. But why need I multiply words? Peace was there concluded between us, and the kiss, which on the previous occasion had proved an obstacle, was now neither demanded by the Archbishop,¹ nor offered by the King. No reference was made to it; the King simply granted us peace and security in the hearing of all the prelates and princes who were present. As regards the royal customs, and the property, both moveables and fixtures, of which we had been deprived, the same form of agreement was now observed as at the previous conference, when the refusal to grant the *osculum pacis* was the impediment

¹ Had Becket, enthusiast as he was, already made up his mind to consecrate the cause of the Church with his blood?

to our success. And now Christ's champion, eager for peace, and not afraid of death, made no request for the kiss, lest it should prove an obstacle to reconciliation, but accepted the King's terms as they were offered, influenced by charity rather than by dread of a violent end. And the peace was therefore concluded on the Feast of St Mary Magdalene, in the midst of a grassy meadow, which lay on the borders of Maine and Chartraine, between the castles of Viefui and Fretteville, and which, as we heard long afterwards, was anciently called the 'Traitor's Field.'

"The King and the Archbishop, after saluting, turned their horses aside, and rode together towards a level place, conversing privately with one another; and, among other subjects, the Archbishop asked permission without offence to inflict ecclesiastical punishment on the Archbishop of York and his own suffragans, for the injury they had done to the prerogative of the See of Canterbury by crowning the young Prince Henry. To this the King assented; and Becket, grateful for the concession, immediately, in the sight of the assembled crowd, sprang from his horse, and threw himself humbly at King Henry's feet. But when he prepared to remount, the King courteously held his stirrup, while all the spectators looked on and marvelled, not knowing the cause until the Archbishop related it privately to his friends on their return. And then might you see the thoughts of many hearts revealed,—especially among the courtiers, some of whom rejoiced, while others were depressed, because, up to that moment, they had been plotting discord and sedition. Others, however, showed neither joy nor sorrow at what had taken place, for they suspected its insincerity, and anticipated that the peace would terminate only in sorrow and disappointment. Nor were they deceived, as after-events will show."

For the time, however, the reconciliation was absolute, and

Becket prepared to return to England, heralding his approach by Papal letters of suspension and excommunication directed against his clerical enemies, the Archbishop of York, the Bishops of London, Salisbury, Rochester, and St Asaph, and the Archdeacon of Canterbury. These censures, however, were directed simply to their violation of the privileges of the primacy by assisting in the coronation of Prince Henry (September 10, 1170). And it is a proof of Becket's moderation and sincere desire to keep the peace, that he exempted from the judgments of the Church all the lay adherents of the King, even that notorious adversary, the intriguing John of Oxford.

During the few months which elapsed between the treaty of Fretteville and Becket's return to England, he and the King met twice. On the first occasion, at Tours—which was in the English territory—the Archbishop sought the *osculum pacis* from his sovereign, and hoped to obtain it during the celebration of the mass, where it would seem only a part of the service. But Henry thwarted his design, by ordering the mass for the dead, in which the officiating priest is not called upon to pronounce a benediction. On this occasion the two parted coldly, the one annoyed perhaps at the suspicion implied in the renewed demand for the *osculum pacis*; the other indignant that this surety and safeguard was persistently withheld.

The second interview took place at Chaumont, near Blois, and Henry evinced an unwonted cordiality. Something of his old confidence was shown in his almost pathetic words to his old friend and counsellor. "Why will you resist my wishes? I would place everything in your hands." Years of exile, however, had soured Becket's kindly nature. He misinterpreted the King's language, and refused the olive-branch which it was designed, we think, to offer. "I bethought me," he tells us, "of Satan's speech to our Lord: 'All these things will I give unto thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.'"

Meanwhile Becket had sent his servants into England, that his palace, his houses, and his manor-houses, and the splendours to which he was so partial, might be got ready for him. He also purchased a large supply of French wines, that he might renew his hospitalities. In spite of these preparations, his heart was heavy within him. Dangers lowered across his path, and he felt that he was leaving a secure asylum to venture among a host of determined and desperate enemies. He had no powerful friends in England; most of the bishops, and no inconsiderable portion of the clergy, regarded with alarm and disgust the return of a ruler so able, so resolute, and so severe. Still stronger was the feeling against him of the King's officers, who held in sequestration the revenues of the see, and were unwilling to surrender them; and, stronger still, the animosity of the fierce knights who had seized on lands or castles belonging to or claimed by the church of Canterbury. Foremost among these was Ranulf de Broc, who loudly asserted his determination to keep possession of the Castle of Saltwood; and swore, it is said, that he would take Becket's life before he had eaten a loaf of bread in England. To prevent the arrival of the letters of excommunication, which Henry had sanctioned and the Pope confirmed, armed men kept close watch at the ports of access from the Continent. The most important, however,—the letter suspending the Archbishop of York,—was carried across by a man named Idonea, and the others safely passed through various undiscovered channels.

When the Papal letters arrived, both the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of London were at Canterbury. We are told¹ that as they read them their countenances fell; and there can be little doubt that from that moment Becket's removal was a foregone conclusion.² They addressed a remonstrance

¹ Fitz-Stephen, 281-284.

² Dr Lingard's "History of England," ii. 237.

to him, complaining that he came not in a spirit of peace, but in fire and flame ; trampling his brother bishops under his feet, and making their necks his footstool ; condemning them uncited, unheard, unjudged. Becket replied, " There is no peace, except to men of good-will."

In spite of numerous warnings and of sinister signs, which proved that the peace made at Fretteville with the King did not bind the King's partisans, Becket determined on returning to England. With a goodly train of clerks and gentlemen, and accompanied by John of Oxford, whom Henry had commanded to see him reinstated in his see, he embarked at Whitsand, and, in a vessel carrying the archiepiscopal banner at its mast-head, crossed the channel to Sandwich, where he landed on the 1st of September 1170.





CHAPTER VI.

THE DEATH OF BECKET.

THE Archbishop had no sooner landed than he was assailed by the King's officers, Gervais de Cornhill, Sheriff of Kent, and Reginald de Warrenne, with a body of armed men, who vehemently demanded that he should absolve the bishops, and would fain have compelled a foreign ecclesiastic, the Archdeacon of Sens, to take an oath to keep the King's peace. Even John of Oxford was disgusted by their violence, which he sternly reprimanded; and after some angry expostulations, they went their way. On entering the town, a very different reception awaited Becket. The inhabitants thronged the streets through which he passed, and kneeling by the wayside, implored his benediction, while a loud shout rent the air: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" As he progressed towards Canterbury the enthusiasm increased. From every village the populace came forth to meet him, headed by their clergy, and bearing in front of them the cross; they strewed their garments in his road; while the bells rang a merry peal, and the loud chant passed from lip to lip, until it seemed as if he were accompanied by one continuous strain of harmony.

On arriving at Canterbury he repaired at once to the cathedral, attended by a vast procession of monks and priests.

Prostrate before the high altar, he prayed in silence, while the breathless multitude gave vent to their irrepressible emotions in deep sobs. Then he arose, and seating himself on the archiepiscopal throne, received his clergy one by one, and in the enthusiasm of the moment, all misunderstandings being forgiven and forgotten, he gave to each the kiss of peace. Afterwards he preached a sermon from the significant text, "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come."¹ The day concluded with a banquet and general rejoicings; the streets resounded with joyous cheers, and the blare of trumpets.

On the following morning, the scene was again clouded. The Sheriff of Kent, with Ranulf de Broc, and the bishops' messengers, forced themselves into his presence to demand their absolution. The Archbishop replied that the sentence of excommunication had not been pronounced by him, but by the Pope; that it was not for him to abrogate it; nevertheless, if they would pledge themselves to stand a public trial, he would step beyond his duty and absolve them. It is said that the Bishops of London and Salisbury were not unwilling to submit, but were dissuaded by the Archbishop of York, who relied upon his immense wealth; and the three prelates, therefore, made haste to join the King in Normandy.

After spending a week at Canterbury, Becket resolved on a visit to the young King, who had formerly been his pupil; and to propitiate his favour, he sent on in advance three splendid chargers, chosen by himself in Flanders, and worthy of any monarch's stable. His progress to London was one long triumph. At Rochester he was received by the bishop and clergy, and entertained with great splendour. Three weeks before he reached the metropolis, another procession met him, consisting of three thousand poor clerks and scholars

¹ Heb. xiii. 14.

attached to the London churches ; and, accompanied by an immense multitude of men and women of all classes, singing the *Te Deum*, and afterwards the *Benedictus*, they conducted him to St Mary's, a church of the Canons Regular in Southwark. Thence he repaired to the palace of Henry of Blois, the venerable Bishop of Winchester, where he passed the night (December 13th).

On the following day he received orders from the young King to proceed no further, but return immediately to his diocese. Becket obeyed, though not without many misgivings. Before leaving the neighbourhood of London, he halted for a few days at a manor-house he possessed in the village of Harrow, and here he had an affecting interview with Simon the Abbot of St Albans. He embraced him tenderly, and persuaded him to make a last attempt to reconcile the Primate with the young Prince.¹ The Abbot went to Woodstock, but returned unsuccessful. "Let be! let be!" sighed Becket, shaking his head wearily; "do not the days of the end hasten to their completion? My lord Abbot," he continued, "I owe you many acknowledgments of your fruitless labour. The sick man is sometimes beyond the reach of physicians, but he will soon bear his own judgment." The Abbot entreated him to spend the Christmas festival and St Stephen's Day at St Alban's, the abbey of the great British martyr. "Oh! how willingly would I come," said Becket, with tears; "but it has been otherwise ordered. Return in peace, dear brother; return in peace to your church, which may God preserve!—unless you will come with me, and be my guest and my comforter in many troubles."

On arriving for the last time at Canterbury, Becket was informed of numerous instances of hostility on the part of the De Brocs of Saltwood. They lay in wait to molest his retainers, they hunted in his chase, they killed his deer, they car-

¹ Matthew Paris.

ried off his stags. Ranulf de Broc had seized a vessel laden with wine from the King, but this he was compelled by Prince Henry to restore, and to release the crew, whom he had imprisoned in Pevensey Castle. Robert de Broc, who had been a monk in the novitiate, but had afterwards returned to a secular life, now seized a sumpter mule belonging to the Archbishop, and cut off the tail close to the stump. This outrage seems to have peculiarly wounded Becket, because, perhaps, of its wanton insolence.¹

Christmas Day came, and after celebrating the usual midnight mass, he entered the cathedral for the services of that great festival. Mounting the pulpit, he preached from the text, "On earth peace to men of good will."² He referred to the holy fathers of the church of Canterbury, whose bones made doubly hallowed the consecrated ground. "One martyr," he said, "they had already—Alfege, murdered by the Danes at Greenwich³—it was possible they would soon have another." The crowds in the nave were roused to a frenzy of excitement, and wept and groaned, and cried aloud, "Father, why do you abandon us so soon? To whose care will you leave us?" etc. But his strain of melancholy soon changed into one of indignation, as the man triumphed over the priest, and he remembered all the wrongs he had suffered. "You would have thought," says Herbert of Bosham, "that you were looking at the Apocalyptic beast, which had at once the face of a man and the face of a lion." Referring to the outrage of the sumpter mule, he excommunicated Ranulf and Robert de Broc; and in the same judgment included the Vicar of Thirlwood and Nigel de Sackville, the vicar of Harrow, for having intruded into those bene-

¹ He would feel it the more keenly, it may be, as an allusion to his partiality for horses.

² Fitz-Stephen, 296. Becket preached from the Vulgate (or Latin) Bible.

³ His tomb stood on the north side of the high altar.

fices without his authority. He then repeated the excommunication of the three bishops who, contrary to the prerogative of his see, had officiated at the coronation of the younger Henry. "May they be cursed," he said, "by Jesus Christ; and may the memory be blotted out of the assembly of the saints of whomsoever shall sow strife and hatred between me and my lord the King." With these words, he dashed the candle on the pavement in token of their utter extinction; and as he descended from the pulpit to celebrate mass at the altar, he repeated to his cross-bearer, Alexander the Welshman, the prophetic words: "One martyr, St Alfege, you have already; another, if God will, shall you soon have."¹

The service was followed by a Christmas banquet in the hall of his palace. The next day, St Stephen's, and on Sunday, the Feast of St John, he again celebrated mass; and towards dark on Sunday evening, he despatched, with letters for the King of France and the Archbishop of Sens, his faithful servant, Herbert of Bosham, whom he was anxious to save from the impending catastrophe. Herbert was accompanied by the Welsh cross-bearer, and other servants were sent off to the Pope and the Bishop of Norwich. The same night he received a private warning from France that some new attack was meditated.

We must now follow the excommunicated prelates in their hurried flight to Normandy. They joined the King at the Castle of Bur, near Bayeux, shortly before Christmas.² A conference immediately took place, at which they told their tale in what we may presume was no unimpassioned language, while Henry seems to have carefully concealed the fact that he himself had sanctioned their excommunication. To his angry exclamations, the northern Primate replied: "Have patience, sir; the storm cannot be turned aside; but by skilful manage-

¹ Fitz-Stephen, 292.

² Garnier, 64-66. Bur was the scene of Harold's famous oath.

ment we may endure it without much loss, and even gain the character of being the injured party. But to succeed in this design we must be patient, and let Becket work his will unquestioned for the present." "What, then?" said the King; "what would you have me do?" "It is not our duty," replied the Archbishop of York, "to advise your Majesty; ask counsel from your barons and knights." Then some one added—who, it is not known—"But so long as Thomas lives, you will have neither good days, nor peaceful realm, nor quiet life."

At these words, Henry burst into one of those excesses of passion, almost maniacal, to which all the Plantagenets were subject. His countenance turned livid, his eyes flashed fire, his whole frame was convulsed with the swift emotion. "What!" he exclaimed; "shall a varlet who has eaten my bread lift up his heel against me? Shall a fellow whom I have loaded with benefits insult the King and all his family, and trample on my kingdom? Shall a beggar who came to court on a lame sumpter mule sit at his pleasure on the throne itself?" And he added the fatal words: "A curse upon the sluggish wretches whom I have brought up in my court, and who care nothing for their allegiance to their master! Will none deliver me from the insults of this low-born and turbulent priest?"¹ And he rushed out of the room.²

Fatal words! which, as seed falls upon ripe ground, fell on the ears of four men fitted by nature and early training for desperate deeds. These, as Dean Stanley describes them, were—Reginald Fitzurse, "son of the bear," and, according to the Canterbury monks, of truly bear-like character; Hugh de

¹ Compare the narratives of William of Canterbury, ii. 30; Edward Grim, 68; and Fitz-Stephen, 290. See also the picturesque and elaborate summary in Dean Stanley's "Historical Memorials of Canterbury," 47, 48.

² This scene occurred, it is supposed, on the 27th of December.

Moreville, that is, "of the city of death," who was reported to have boiled a young Saxon alive on the false accusation of his wife; William de Tracy, a brave soldier, but, it was said, of "paricidal wickedness;" and Richard le Brez, or le Bret, commonly known by his Latin name of Brito, but more fit to have been named "the Brute." The first three had sworn fealty to Becket during his splendid tenure of the Chancellorship. All four were connected by old ties and associations, and all four were the familiar confidants of the King, and his *cubicularii*, or gentlemen of the bed-chamber. Whether instigated by the Archbishop of York or not, they resolved upon ridding the King of his powerful antagonist; and during the night they started by different roads for the sea-side, crossing the Channel on the following day. When their disappearance was remarked, and their object guessed, three courtiers were despatched to bring them back, but did not overtake them.¹

Two of them landed at the port of Dogs, near Dover, two others at Winchelsea, and all four arrived about evening at Ranulf de Broc's castle of Saltwood. Here, during the long winter night, they sat in the darkness, and arranged the details of their nefarious project. On the following morning, December 29th, collecting an escort of the King's soldiers, under the pretence that they held a royal warrant, thus attended, they rode away to Canterbury, where they took up their quarters with Clarembald, the Abbot of St Augustine's, an old enemy of Becket's. Having sent orders to the Mayor of Canterbury to issue a proclamation forbidding any citizen to offer assistance to the Archbishop, they again mounted their horses, and, accompanied by Robert de Broc, followed the long line of the city wall till they reached the great gateway opening into the

¹ Fitz-Stephen, 291. The King also despatched Richard de Humet to England with orders to arrest the Archbishop.

court of the archiepiscopal palace.¹ A dozen armed men, who had followed them, were posted in the house of a man named Gilbert, near the gate.

It was Tuesday, the 29th of December. Tuesday, as Dean Stanley points out, had always been a memorable day in Becket's life. On a Tuesday he was born and baptized,—on a Tuesday he had fled from Northampton,—on a Tuesday he had quitted the King's court in Normandy,—on a Tuesday he departed from England for his six years' exile,—on a Tuesday he had been warned of his martyrdom in a vision at Pontigny,—on a Tuesday he had returned from banishment,—it was now, on a Tuesday, that the hour of doom came upon him,—it was on a Tuesday his royal enemy, King Henry, was buried,—on a Tuesday the martyr's relics were translated to their magnificent new shrine,—and Tuesday was long regarded as the week-day especially consecrated to the saint with whose good and evil fortunes it had been so singularly interwoven.

Other omens, says Dean Stanley,² were remarked. A soldier engaged in the conspiracy whispered to one of the cellarmen of the Priory that the Archbishop would not see the evening of Tuesday. When this was told to Becket, he only smiled. But when a citizen of Canterbury, named Reginald, informed him there were several in England who thirsted for his blood, he answered, with tears, that he knew he should not be killed out of church. He himself had told several persons in France that he was convinced he should not outlive the year, and only two days were wanting to close the account.

It seems that a presentiment of imminent danger clouded Becket's mind on the morning of the fatal day. Almost before dawn he astonished the clergy who slept in his bed-

¹ For local details, see Dean Stanley's "Historical Memorials of Canterbury."

² Stanley, *ut ante*, 52.

chamber by inquiring whether it was possible for any one to escape to Sandwich before daylight ; and when he was answered in the affirmative, he bade those escape who wished. When the morning was come, he attended mass in the cathedral ; and afterwards, having made confession to two of the monks in the chapter-house, he received his daily penance of three scourgings. At three in the afternoon, he dined in the palace hall, and drinking somewhat more than usual, was reminded of it by his cup-bearer : " He who has much blood to lose," said Becket, " needs much to drink." ¹

The dinner at an end, Becket retired to his private chamber, where, sitting on his bed, he conversed with his chaplains and friends ; whilst the floor of the hall having been freshly strewn with hay and straw, the servants sat down to the fragments of the meal. It was now, according to Gervase, that the four murderers arrived in the palace court, where they dismounted, and leaving their weapons behind, in recognition of the popular feeling against the entrance of armed men within the cathedral precincts, they strode into the hall. The servants, knowing them to be attached to the King's household, invited them to partake of the remainder of the feast.² But they, declining, made their way to the foot of the staircase leading from the hall to the Archbishop's chamber, where they were met by his seneschal, William Fitz-Nigel, who gave them the kiss of welcome, and introduced them, at their request, into Becket's presence.

" My lord," he said,³ " here are four knights from King Henry wishing to have audience of you."

" Let them come in," said Becket.

Entering the room, they took their seats, without saluting him, or speaking a word. Neither, however, did *he* salute them immediately on their entering ; for, says Grim, he

¹ Grandison, v., cit. by Stanley.

² Edward Grim, 70.

³ Garnier, 67, 15.

remembered in his wisdom the words of Scripture, "By thy words shalt thou be justified," and he wished to discover their sentiments or intentions from the questions they might address to him.

Becket, at this time, as Dean Stanley reminds us,¹ was still in the vigour of strength, though in his fifty-third year ; his countenance still retained its majestic and striking aspect ; his eyes were large and piercing, and always glancing to and fro ; and his tall figure, though really spare and thin, had a portly look from the numerous wrappings which he wore underneath his ordinary clothes. Round about him sate, or lay on the floor, the clergy of his household ; John, Archdeacon of Salisbury, always solicitous to control his master's impetuosity of temper ; William Fitz-Stephen, his chaplain ; and Edward Grim, an English monk, from Cambridge, who had but recently arrived.

Becket now turned towards them, and after carefully scrutinising their looks, addressed a few words of greeting. They looked from one to another in silence, and perhaps in some confusion, until Fitzurse, more brutal than the rest, ironically returned the salutation with a scornful "God bless you !"

The Archbishop coloured, and glancing round on their scowling countenances, saw plainly they were bent on some evil purpose.

Fitzurse spoke again : "We bring you a message from the King over the water ; tell us whether it shall be told in private or in the hearing of all."

John of Salisbury here interrupted : "My lord, let us discuss this in private ;" but the Archbishop, suspecting the nature of their errand, simply answered, "As you wish." "Not so," said Fitzurse, "but as you wish." "Nay," said Becket again, "as you wish."

The monks had already withdrawn into an adjacent apart-

¹ Dean Stanley's "Historical Memorials of Canterbury," 53, 54.

ment ; but the door-keeper threw the door ajar, that they might see all that was going on.¹ Scarcely, however, had Fitzurse began his message, before Becket felt a sudden consciousness of his danger, and exclaiming, "This must not be told in secret !" he ordered the monks to be recalled. For a moment Becket was alone with the knights, and the thought occurred to them, as they afterwards confessed, of killing him, on the spot, with the shaft of the cross which lay at his feet.

The monks returning, Fitzurse resumed his speech.²

"When the King made peace with you," he said, "and every cause of strife seemed ended, he sent you back to your own see in perfect freedom, according to your own request ; but you, on the other hand, have heaped insults on your former injuries, and disregarding the terms of reconciliation, those of his servants by whose ministry his son was crowned and invested with the honours of sovereignty, you, through your pride and obstinacy, have wrongfully suspended. Moreover, you have anathematised his counsellors, by whose prudent advice the affairs of the kingdom are regulated ; so that it is evident you would, if you were able, deprive the King's son of his crown, and the persevering schemes by which you seek to accomplish your objects, and plot against the King, are known to all men. Say, then, are you ready to accompany us to the King, to make answer against these accusations ; for such is our design in coming hither?"³

The Archbishop answered :—"I declare before God that it was never my wish to diminish the power of my lord the King's son, or deprive him of his crown. I would rather give him

¹ Roger, 161, 162.

² Edward Grim, 71.

³ We are not to suppose that these were the exact words spoken by Fitzurse, but rather the substance of his speech embodied in Grim's own language. So rude a warrior would scarcely be able to deliver himself with such smoothness.

three crowns, and should have every motive, both in reason and equity, to assist him in obtaining a wider territory. But, on the other hand, it is not just that my lord the King should be offended because my people accompany me, and come forth to meet me in the towns and villages, seeing that for seven years they have been deprived by my exile of the consolations of my presence. But even now I am ready to give him satisfaction, whenever he so wills, for aught that I have done amiss ; but he has denounced me in the strongest terms, and forbidden me to enter any of his cities, towns, or villages. And as to the suspension of the bishops, that was done by our lord the Pope, and not by me."

"But it was done by your means," replied the knights ; "and we require you to absolve them."

"I do not deny," said Becket, "that it was done at my instigation ; but it is beyond my authority, and unsuitable to my position, to loose those whom my lord the Pope has bound. Let them go for absolution to him, whom they have offended by their contemptuous disregard of their metropolitan see, Christ's Church of Canterbury."

"Well, then," they continued, "this is the King's command : that you leave this kingdom, and all other of his dominions, with everything that is yours ; for from this day there can be no peace between him and you, or any of your people, inasmuch as you have broken the peace."

"I reckon not your threats," said the Archbishop. "I trust in the God of heaven, who suffered on the cross for the sake of His people ; and never again shall the ocean separate me from my church. I did not return in order to flee a second time ; and whoever wants me shall find me here ; and, in truth, it ill becomes the dignity of a King to issue such a mandate. I and my people have always received sufficient injuries from his ministers, without the addition of these menaces."

"Such, however," they answered, "are the orders of our lord the King, and we will stand by them; for whereas you ought to have shown respect to the King's majesty, and submitted your lust of revenge to his paramount justice, you have blindly followed the impulse of your passion, and shamefully excommunicated his ministers and servants."

At these words, says Grim, Christ's champion, rising in the ardour of his soul against their calumnies, exclaimed—

"Whoever shall dare to violate the laws of the Holy Roman See, or the privileges of Christ's Church, and shall refuse to come voluntarily and offer satisfaction for his offence, the same shall meet with no mercy at my hands, nor will I shrink from inflicting the censures of the Church upon him. But as for you," he continued, turning to his former vassals, Reginald Fitzurse, William de Tracy, and Hugh de Moreville,—“as for you, I marvel at your conduct in this matter, remembering the bond that exists between us.”¹

¹ We have followed, up to this point, Edward Grim's narrative. He was present on the occasion, and relates all he saw and heard with grave simplicity. A somewhat different version is given by other chroniclers, which is thus condensed and arranged by Dean Stanley :—

"The monks hurried back, and Fitzurse, apparently calmed by their presence, resumed his statement of the complaints of the King. These complaints, which are given by various chroniclers in very different words, were three in number.

"The King over the water commands you to perform your duty to the King on this side the water, instead of taking away his crown."

"Rather than take away his crown," replied Becket, "I would give him three or four crowns."

"You have excited disturbances in the kingdom, and the King requires you to answer for them at his court."

"Never," said the Archbishop, "shall the sea again come between me and my church, unless I am dragged thence by the feet."

"You have excommunicated the bishops; you must absolve them."

Starting to their feet, angered, and yet confounded by his just reproach, they advanced threateningly towards him, gnashing their teeth, twisting their long gloves, and wildly throwing their arms above their heads.

"We tell you, in good sooth, that what you have said will recoil upon yourself."

"What!" cried the Archbishop springing from his couch, "have you come to slay me? Then do I commit my cause to the Great Judge of all mankind, and will not be moved from my purpose by your threats. Your swords are not more ready

"'It was not I,' replied Becket, 'but the Pope, and you must go to him for absolution.'

He then appealed, in language which is variously reported, to the promises of the King at their interview in the preceding July. Fitzurse burst forth—

"'What is it you say? You charge the King with treachery?'

"'Reginald, Reginald,' said Becket, 'I do no such thing; but I appeal to the archbishops, bishops, and great people, five hundred and more, who heard it, and you were present yourself, Sir Reginald.'

"'I was not,' said Reginald; 'I never saw nor heard anything of the kind.'

"'You were,' said Becket; 'I saw you.'

"The knights, irritated by this contradiction, swore again and again, 'by God's wounds,' that they had borne with him long enough. John of Salisbury, the prudent counsellor of the Archbishop, who perceived that matters were advancing to extremities, whispered, 'My Lord, speak privately to them about this.'

"'No,' said Becket; 'they make proposals and demands which I cannot and ought not to admit.'

"He, in his turn, complained of the insults he had received. First came the grand grievances of the preceding week.

"'They have attacked my servants, they have cut off my sumpter mule's tail, they have carried off the casks of wine that were the King's own gift.'

"It was now that Hugh de Moreville, the gentlest of the four, put in a milder answer—

"'Why did you not complain to the King of these outrages? Why did you take upon yourself to punish them by your own authority?'

to strike than is my soul to suffer martyrdom. Go, pursue those who would flee from you ; but as for me, I will meet you foot to foot in the battle of the Lord."

Some of the clerks and servants, with a few soldiers of the household, here entered into the chamber, and gathered round their master to defend him. Fitzurse, whose bearish name, says Grim, fitly describes the man, turned to them and shouted, "Ho ! ye clerks and monks, we order ye in the King's name to seize that man, and guard him that he may not escape, until the King shall have ample justice on his person."

"I shall not escape," said the Archbishop, proudly.

On this they hurriedly retired, carrying away with them

"The Archbishop turned round sharply upon him—

"'Hugh ! how proudly you lift your head ! When the rights of the Church are violated, I shall wait for no man's permission to avenge them. I will give to the King the things which are the King's, but to God the things that are God's. It is my business, and I alone will see to it.'

"For the first time in the interview, the Archbishop had assumed an attitude of defiance ; the fury of the knights broke at once through the bands which had partially restrained it, and displayed itself openly in those impassioned gestures which are now confined to the half civilised nations of the south and east, but which seem to have been natural to all classes of mediæval Europe. Their eyes flashed fire ; they sprang upon their feet, and rushing close up to him, gnashed their teeth, twisted their long gloves, wildly threw their arms above their heads. Fitzurse exclaimed—

"'You threaten us, you threaten us ; are you going to excommunicate us all?'

"One of the others added—

"'As I hope for God's mercy, he shall not do that ; he has excommunicated too many already.'

"The Archbishop also sprang from his couch in a state of strong excitement.

"'You threaten me,' he said, 'in vain ; were all the swords in England hanging over my head, you could not tempt me from my obedience to God and my lord the Pope. Foot to foot shall you find me in the battle of the Lord.'"—DEAN STANLEY'S "*Historical Memorials of Canterbury*."

William Fitz-Nigel, an old companion. He called out to his master, "You see what they are doing with me!" He answered, "This is their hour, and the power of darkness."¹ Lingered a moment at the door, they exclaimed, "It is you who threaten," adding some words of menace in a hoarse undertone, and bidding the servants take heed of their commands. Becket's quick ear caught their muttered defiance, and darting after them, besought them to release Fitz-Nigel. Then he requested Moreville, the gentlest of the four, to return and repeat the royal message; and, finally, raising his hand to his head, "as by a presentiment marking the place where he should receive their strokes,"² he cried aloud, "Here, here you shall find me; here I will await you."

The knights paid no attention to his solicitations, but continued to retire, taking with them as they went another of the Archbishop's knights, one Radulf Morin, and shouting (as they strode into the court), "To arms! to arms!" At the outcry, the rest of their companions poured through the great gateway, with the watchword, "Réaux! Réaux!" (King's men! King's men!) The gate was closed, that no assistance might arrive from the town. The Archbishop's porter was removed, and at the open wicket were stationed William Fitz-Nigel, and Simon de Croil, one of the knights of St Augustine. Throwing aside their cloaks and gowns, the four assassins appeared in their armour, and buckled on their swords. On their return towards the hall, Osbert and Algar, two of the servants, closed and barred the doors, which the knights in vain attempted to force open. But Robert de Broc, who had known the palace during the time of its occupancy by his uncle, Randolph, called out, "Follow me, good sirs, and I will show you a different way!"

So they got into the orchard behind the kitchen, whence a

¹ Fitz-Stephen, 296.

² Edward Grim, 73.

staircase which some carpenters were repairing led to an anti-chamber opening into the Archbishop's bedroom. Here Fitzurse seized an axe, and the others hatchets, left behind by the workmen who had gone to their dinner, and climbing the staircase to the anti-chamber, they broke through an oriel-window into the hall, attacked and wounded the servants on guard, and opened the door to the rest of their party. The Archbishop's room was still barred and inaccessible.

Most of the servants, terrified by the clash of weapons and the rush of armed men, now fled in every direction like sheep in the presence of the wolf.¹ Becket, meanwhile, remained seated on his couch, calmly listening to the mild reproof of John of Salisbury, that he never acted upon the advice of his friends, but always did and said what seemed good to himself alone. "What would you have me do, dear John," said Becket.

"You ought to have consulted with your friends, knowing as you do that these men only seek occasion to kill you."

"I am prepared to die," said Becket, calmly.

"We are sinners," answered John, "and not yet prepared for death; and I know of no one who wishes to die without cause except yourself."

"Let God's will be done," exclaimed the Archbishop.

"Would to Heaven it may all end well!" murmured John, in despair.²

Here a monk rushed in with the alarming intelligence that the monks were arming. Becket, a true member of the Church militant, contemptuously cried, "Let them arm." But at the sound of the tumult in the hall, many of the monks, whom an ascetic and lethargic life naturally rendered timid, took to flight, leaving the Archbishop attended only by a few faithful friends. These implored him to seek an asylum within the sacred area

¹ Edward Grim, 73.

² Benedict, 62.

of the cathedral. "No, no," he said; "be not you afraid; all monks are cowards."

He did not forget, says Grim, the pledge which he had given not to fly, but to await the coming of his murderers; wherefore he refused to escape, or to flee in such an emergency from city to city, choosing rather to set an example to his inferiors, that they should all submit to death rather than see the Divine law neglected and the holy canons subverted. Moreover, he now perceived that the hour of martyrdom, for which he had long sighed, was approaching, and he feared lest it might be delayed, if not altogether deferred, should he retire into the cathedral.

The monks, however, persisted, saying that he ought not to absent himself from nones and vespers, which at that moment were beginning to be chanted.

Either influenced by this consideration, or carried along by the violence of his friends, he rose and moved; but seeing that his cross-staff was not as usual borne before him, he stopped until it was elevated by one of his clerks, Henry of Auxerre. Then he proceeded towards the cathedral,—not by the usual passage through the orchard, which was thronged with armed men,—but through a side-room to a small private postern, opening from the palace upon the cloisters of the monastery.¹ Here they met with a sudden obstacle, for the door had been shut for several days, and as the murderers were now close at hand, all hope of escape seemed lost. But one of the monks running forward, caught hold of the lock, and to the surprise of all it flew open, "as if it had been held together with glue."²

¹ Garnier, 71.

² Edward Grim, 73, 74. From Benedict's account we learn that two of the cellarmen of the monastery, alarmed by the noise, hastened to the cloister, and at Becket's approach, drew back the bolt, without Becket's party knowing of their presence.

No sooner had the monks hurried Becket into the cloisters than they ran to bar the door, a precaution, however, which he sternly forbade. For a few steps he moved forward with his usual stately step, preceded by his cross-bearer; halting once, and looking back, either to see that the gate was not closed, or if his enemies were in pursuit. Then the monk who had hastened to unlock the door, called out, "Seize him, and carry him!" And in despite of his exertions he was carried along the northern and eastern cloister, until the door at the lower north transept of the cathedral was reached. Here he was met by some of the ecclesiastics who were chanting vespers in the choir, and who cried, in tones of the most piteous entreaty, "Come in! come in! and let us die together!" "Nay," said Becket, still standing without, "go ye and finish the service. So long as ye stand in the entrance I shall not come in."

They retired a few paces, and he stepped inside the door; but finding the church crowded with pale and anxious faces, he paused, and demanded, "What is it these people fear?" The reply was unanimous—"The armed men in the cloister." He turned, saying, "I will go forth to them," when the knights were seen advancing along its southern side.¹ As already stated, they were in full armour; they carried their swords drawn, and their vizors covered their faces. With them came Hugh of Horsea, known for his evil character by the surname of *Mau-clerc*,² a sub-dean and chaplain of Robert de Broc. Foremost strode Fitzurse, brandishing the carpenter's axe, and shouting, "*Réaux! Réaux!*" Immediately in the van followed Robert Fitz-Ranulf, with three other knights, whose names are not preserved, and "a motley group" of their retainers, all carrying weapons.

At this unwonted and terrible sight—all the more terrible on account of the sacrilege it involved—the monks rushed to

¹ Dean Stanley, 62.

² Grim, 74.

the door, closed it, and dropped iron bars across it.¹ The frightened crowd without, who had vainly attempted to prevent the knights from entering the cloister, now knocked loudly, demanding admission into the church. Becket immediately darted back, removed the iron bars, threw wide the door, and catching hold of the trembling monks, exclaimed, "Come in, come in! faster, faster!" And he added—"It is not fitting to convert Christ's temple into a fortress; it is able to protect its own, even though its doors be open; and we shall triumph over our enemies rather by suffering than by fighting; we came here to endure, and not to resist." Then, there being no impediment, says Grim, the murderers entered the house of peace and concord with drawn swords, while their fierce eyes and clashing swords struck terror to the hearts of the spectators. A terror so great that they fled in all directions,—even John of Salisbury yielding to the general panic,—and in a minute or two none were left with the Archbishop but his old instructor, Robert, Canon of Merton; William Fitzstephen, his chaplain, and Edward Grim, the faithful English monk. These would fain have had him retire to one or other of two secure hiding-places which they indicated; and when he calmly refused to fly, they besought him to ascend the choir, whose special holiness would possibly be respected even by such men as Fitzurse and De Broc, and hurried him up one of the two flights of steps which led to it.

It was now about five o'clock, and the darkness was only partially illuminated by the lamps which burnt before the various altars. Through the gathering gloom the knights, finding the door open, poured into the north transept, the same as that which is still known by its ancient name of "The Martyrdom." Here, to render intelligible what follows, we must borrow some local particulars from Dean Stanley.² Two staircases led from

¹ Benedict, 65.

² Dean Stanley, 65.

this transept ; one from the east to the northern aisle ; one on the west, to the entrance of the choir. At its south-west corner, where it joined the nave, stood the little chapel and altar of the Virgin, the especial patroness of the Primate. Its eastern apse was formed by two chapels, raised one above the other ; the upper in the roof, containing the relics of St Blaise, the first martyr whose bones had been brought into the church, and which gave to the chapel a peculiar sanctity ; the lower containing the altar of St Benedict, under whose rule, from the time of Dunstan, the monastery had been placed. Before and around this altar stood the tombs of four Saxon and two Norman archbishops. In the centre of the transept was a pillar, supporting a gallery which led to the Chapel of St Blaise, and hung, at great festivals, with curtains and draperies. Such, says Dean Stanley, was the outward aspect, and such were the associations, of the scene which now, perhaps, for the first time, opened on the four soldiers. But the darkness, coupled with the eagerness to find their victim, would have prevented them from noticing anything more than its prominent features. At the moment of their entrance, the central pillar exactly intercepted their view of the Archbishop ascending the staircase to the choir. Fitzurse, with his drawn sword in one hand, and the carpenter's axe in the other, sprang in first, and turned at once to the right of the pillar. The other three went round it to the left. In the dim twilight they could just discern a group of figures mounting the steps.

The assassins, in their fury, shouted, "Stay ! where is Thomas Becket, traitor to the King and the kindgom ?"

To such a question the Archbishop vouchsafed no reply ; he would not acknowledge himself guilty of treason. Fitzurse then demanded, "Where is the Archbishop ?"

Instantly, with a pious heart, and remembering the words of Scripture, "The just shall be without fear, like a bold lion," he

descended into the transept, replying, "Here I am, Reginald ; no traitor, but the Archbishop, and a priest of God. What do you want of me?" And he added,¹ "Here I am, ready to suffer in the name of Him who redeemed me with His blood ; far be it from me to flee or flinch from what is right for fear of your swords."

Attired in his white rochet, he stood erect and majestic, between the central pillar and the massive wall of St Benedict's Chapel. They pressed around him, shouting, "Absolve the bishops whom you have excommunicated."

"I cannot do other than I have done," he replied ; and turning to Fitzurse, he said, "Reginald, you have received many favours at my hands : why come you into my church armed?"

Fitzurse, thrusting his axe against his benefactor's breast, answered brutally, "You shall die ; I will tear out your heart."

Another, striking him between the shoulders with the flat of his sword, exclaimed, "Fly ! you are a dead man !"

"And I am ready to die," he rejoined, "that the Church, through my blood, may obtain peace and freedom ; but I forbid you, in the name of God, to do any injury to these my attendants, whether clerks or laymen."

How piously, how thoughtfully, says his biographer, did the blessed martyr thus provide for the safety of his flock, that no one near him should be hurt, and that no innocent blood should taint the glory in which he was speedily to ascend before the throne of Christ ! Thus did it behove the blessed martyr to follow in the steps of his Leader and Saviour, who, when the wicked sought him, said, "If you seek Me, let these go their way."

The knights, though bent on his murder,² were unwilling to

¹ Grim, 75.

² Dean Hook thinks it was the object of the knights, not to murder the

shed blood in the holy place ; and their efforts were now addressed to the task of dragging him from the church. Fitzurse seized him by the collar of his long cloak, crying, "Come with us ; you are our prisoner."

"I will not fly, abominable wretch !" shouted Becket, as he tore his cloak out of the rude soldier's grasp.

With the assistance of Hugh Mauclerc, they then endeavoured to throw him upon Tracy's shoulders ; but setting his back against the pillar, and assisted by sturdy Grim, the strong man successfully defied their combined violence. Clutching Tracy by his coat of mail, he shook him like a child, and flung him down upon the marble pavement with a crash. Then the knights felt that their deed, if done at all, must be done in the cathedral ; and ferocious Fitzurse, always foremost in the attack, advanced upon him with his sword.

Becket's hot temper was now aroused. "Ponder !" he cried ; "you owe me allegiance ; you are my man ; you dare not touch me."

"I owe no allegiance," retorted Fitzurse, white with rage, "contrary to my allegiance to the King."¹ And brandishing his sword aloft, he shouted, "Strike ! strike !" but in his agitation only dashed off the Archbishop's cap.

Becket, perceiving that the hour was come when his victory would be assured by his death, bowed his neck in prayer, clasped his hands over his eyes, and prayed : "I commend my cause and the cause of the Church to God, the Holy Virgin Mary, and the blessed martyr St Denys of France."

Meanwhile Tracy, having thrown aside his hauberk that he might move the more quickly, leapt forward, and dealt a heavy blow, which was partly intercepted by the outstretched arm of

Archbishop, but to make him prisoner. On what grounds he comes to this conclusion, we are unable to imagine.

¹ Grim, 76.

Grim, the English monk. Becket exclaimed, "Spare this defence!" for he saw it was useless; and Grim, with his arm wounded or broken, fled confused to the nearest altar.¹ The spent force of the stroke fell upon Becket's head, "shaving off the top of the sacred crown (the tonsure), by which he had dedicated himself to God," and cutting through clothes and skin, rested on his left shoulder. It was followed by another blow on the bleeding head, which Becket drew back as if stunned, and then raised his folded palms to cover it. Seeing the blood trickle from the wound, he cried, "Into Thy hand, O Lord, I commend my spirit!" A third blow, dealt also by Tracy, felled him to his knees, with his face turned towards the altar of St Benedict, where Grim had taken refuge. Murmuring, "For the name of Jesus, and in defence of His Church, I die willingly," he fell flat on his face, moving neither hand nor foot, and with such dignity that his mantle, which extended from his shoulders to his feet, was in no wise disarranged.

In this position he received a tremendous blow from Richard the Breton, which severed the scalp, or crown of the head, from the skull, and falling on the pavement, shivered the sword in fragments. "Take that," cried the knight, "for love of my lord William, brother of the King," in allusion to an old quarrel between the prince and the Archbishop.

The red blood issued forth, says Grim, very quaintly, mingling itself with the whiteness of his brains, and the two together stained our holy virgin Mother Church with the colour of the lily and the rose, depicting the life as well as the death of God's confessor and martyr.

Hugh Mauclerc now stepped forward, and planting his heel on the neck of the corpse, thrust his sword into the ghastly wound, and scattered the brains over the marble pavement. "Let us go," he said; "the traitor is dead, and will rise no more."

¹ Fitz-Stephen, 302.

It will be seen from the foregoing narrative that one of the knights had had no actual share in the murder. This was De Moreville, who stood at the entrance of the transept and kept back the crowds pouring in from the nave.

The dreadful deed done, the murderers hurried out of the church, crossed the cloisters, and entered the palace. Here, while some of them removed the horses from the stables, others attacked and wounded the servants; and breaking open desk, coffer, and treasury, divided among them all the gold and silver, clothes, and other ornaments which they could find.

Amongst the articles, says Herbert of Bosham, they discovered two shirts of sackcloth which Christ's holy champion was wont to wear next to his naked skin; these they neither divided, nor yet drew lots for, but flung them aside as of no value. Great was their astonishment, however, at so signal a proof of the Archbishop's zeal and devotion; wherefore some of the company confessed with the centurion in the Gospel, though in muttered accents, lest Tracy and Fitzurse should overhear them, "Truly this was a righteous man!" and they shrunk away from the palace, beating their breasts with their hands. One of the murderous knights (Tracy), repenting afterwards of his share in the crime, and making confession to Bartholomew, Bishop of Exeter, acknowledged that though they had gone at first to the church with all eagerness of mind, and even with rejoicing, yet no sooner was the deed done than they returned with hesitating steps, and the ground seemed to yawn beneath them as if it would swallow them up alive.

That same night, a tremendous storm of rain and thunder broke over Canterbury, and a darkness which might be felt gathered round the cathedral towers.¹

Even before the murder was completed, an alarm had been raised in the city; and now that the armed men had retired,

¹ Fitz-Stephen, 304.

a crowd began to rush to the cathedral, beating their breasts and clasping their hands in agony for the loss of their father and protector. Not the rich, but the poor it was who thus hastened to view the dead body of the soldier of the Great King ; for, while still militant on earth, he had been the constant stay of the poor, the father of the orphan, the guardian of the unprotected ward, the husband of the widow, and the mourner's comforter. Pressing into the church, whose roofs re-echoed their lamentations, they threw themselves on the corpse, and reverently kissed the martyr's hands and feet.¹

At length the monks dismissed the multitude, and closed the doors of the church. Robert, the Archbishop's chamberlain, entering soon afterwards with a light, found the body still lying on the pavement, with the scalp hanging to the head by a fragment of skin. Cutting off a portion of his shirt, he bound up the ghastly wound as well as he was able. Then he admitted the monks, who gave way, unchecked by fear, to the full expression of their grief, and, raising the body, with many tears and sobs, they laid it down in front of the high altar. It was noted as a remarkable circumstance that the blood had congealed round the head in the form of a crown, as if to typify the martyr's sanctity, but that his face was entirely free from stain, except one slender thread, which had trickled diagonally from the right side of his forehead to the left side of his neck.

Some of the spectators now smeared their eyes with the martyr's blood, and dipped their clothes in it ; others brought bottles, and secretly carried off as much of it as they could collect. The monks, becoming aware of the value of every relic, as their enthusiasm increased, gathered up the remainder of the blood into a clean vial, and deposited it in the treasury of

¹ Amongst them, however, were a few of the "King's men," who were overheard to mutter : "He wished to be king, and more than king ; now let him be king !"

the church. Afterwards, when Becket's memory was in the full odour of sanctity, they regretted deeply their heedless extravagance in giving away the pall and outer pelisse to the poor that they might pray for their benefactor's soul.

As we have said, the body was deposited before the high altar, and around it the sorrowing monks kept watch until the night was spent. Drops of blood continued to ooze from the wound in the skull, and were caught in a dish placed for the purpose.¹ Notwithstanding the quantity which had already flowed, the face did not lose its colour, nor the eyes their prominence; the neck was not emaciated, nor were the shoulders fallen; the body preserved its elasticity, and the skin its firmness. The countenance retained its majestic comeliness, and bore upon its lips a smile of serenity and contentment. He seemed, in fact, says one of the monks,² not so much to have breathed his last as to have closed his eyes and lapsed into a sound slumber.

When the morning came, the monks made ready to inter the body, being hastened in their movements by a threat from Robert de Broc, that, were it not buried quickly, it should be dragged out by the feet and thrown to the dogs and swine. They had no time, therefore, to wash and embalm it, according to the custom of the Church; but stripping it of its outward clothing, they attired it in the pontifical robes. While thus engaged, Robert, the Canon of Merton, the Archbishop's confessor and chaplain, made known to them what none had known before, that the once gay and splendid Chancellor had for years worn next to his skin a shirt of hair-cloth, covering not only his back, but his shoulders, arms, and thighs, and above this, a monk's habit. On coming to the hair-cloth, they found it seething with innumerable vermin. At such indubitable signs (for so in Becket's time they were considered) of superior

¹ Roger of Pontigny, 168, 169.

² William of Canterbury, 33.

saintliness, the monks, in an ecstasy of spiritual joy, raised their hands to heaven, and gave God thanks for the Archbishop's twofold martyrdom ; the voluntary one of his life, the violent one of his death. They threw themselves on their knees, kissing the hands and feet, and proclaiming him martyr and saint.¹ How could they ever have suspected such a man of ambition or treachery? Could he have set his thoughts upon earthly power, who had thus mortified himself in secret?

The body, now being newly clothed in archiepiscopal vestments, was laid by the monks in a new marble sarcophagus, which stood in the ancient crypt behind the Virgin's shrine, between the altars of St Augustine and John the Baptist, the latter, as was observed, "the first archbishop, and the bold opponent of a wicked king." The remains of the Primate's brains and blood were placed outside the tomb, and the doors of the crypt carefully barred. No mass was said, for armed men having entered the cathedral, it was supposed to have been desecrated ; its pavement was taken up ; its bells ceased to ring ; the rich hangings were torn down from the massive walls ; the crucifixes were veiled, and the altars laid bare, as in Passion Week ; and the services were conducted in the chapter-house, without the aid of music. In the following year, however, the church was formally reconsecrated by the Bishops of Exeter and Chester ; and on the 21st of December 1171 the former celebrated mass, and preached a sermon on the text, "For the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart, Thy comforts have refreshed my soul."

The news of Becket's murder was received in all parts of England and the Continent with indignation and disgust, and the popular enthusiasm, anticipating the action of the court of Rome, declared that he had suffered as a saint and a martyr. For the present, we must confine ourselves to the influence it

¹ Herbert of Bosham.

had upon the man whose incautious words had in some degree been its cause.

Henry, when the tidings reached him, was at Argentine, in the south of Normandy. His political sagacity immediately foresaw all the ill consequences that must flow from so violent a deed, and his compunction at the death of an old friend and counsellor was heightened by his feeling of its lamentable imprudence. Exchanging his royal robes for sackcloth and ashes, he shut himself up for three whole days in his chambers, refusing all food except milk of almonds, and yielding to such an excess of grief that his attendants feared it would kill him. "We had now," says Arnulf of Lisieux, "a double cause of anxiety. First we had to lament the death of the Archbishop; now we almost despaired of the life of the King; and so, in losing one, we thought our evil fortune would deprive us of both." When his friends, and particularly the prelates, complained that he would not moderate his grief, he answered, that his fear was lest the perpetrators of the deed, and their accomplices, remembering his long quarrel with the Archbishop, might have promised themselves immunity on that account; and he was apprehensive also that his enemies might accuse him of being privy to it. He loudly declared that he was in no way responsible, except in letting the world know that he was not fully reconciled to the Archbishop.

The French King, the Archbishop of Sens, and others, did not hesitate, however, to denounce him to the Pope as the actual murderer of Becket, and Henry, afraid of an excommunication for himself and an interdict for his kingdom, despatched envoys to Alexander III., to offer his submission. At first they were refused an interview, and it was not without much difficulty the Pope was persuaded to pardon the royal penitent. Becket, by his death, secured that victory for the Church which had been the object of his later life. Henry

was now constrained, besides doing public penance in the cathedral of Avranches (May 22, 1172), to renounce the famous Constitutions of Clarendon, restore the property of the See of Canterbury, and swear allegiance to the Pope. Moreover, he pledged himself, at the Pope's bidding, to undertake a three years' crusade to Jerusalem or Spain, and to support two hundred soldiers for the defence of the holy sepulchre. Thenceforth, for several generations, the Church remained, as Becket had wished it to be, a power in the land; the co-rival, and frequently the antagonist, of the crown; and so far working out a good work, that it protected the commons against the oppression of the king and barons, until they had attained to a position which rendered its protection no longer necessary. The Church, in Becket's eye, was the defender of the poor; and the popular instinct was therefore right in looking upon Becket's cause as the cause of the people, in regarding him as the people's champion, and in lamenting his death as the death of a true hero.

Every student of English history knows how dark were the last years of Henry's reign; how he suffered from rebellion at home and abroad, and from that bitterest of all evils, domestic treachery. The people attributed these misfortunes, and he himself attributed them, to the share which he had had in the murder of Becket, who had now been canonised, and whose fame had spread throughout all Christendom. He determined, by way of expiation, on a signal and public penance. Returning to England on the 2d July 1172, he restricted himself to a diet of bread and water, devoted himself to prayer and meditation; and reaching Canterbury on the 12th, he walked barefoot through its stony streets to the cathedral. Then he went direct to the scene of the murder, and kneeling down, and kissing the sacred stone on which Becket had yielded up his life, he made confession of his sins.

Afterwards, the Bishop of London, in the King's name, declared aloud his repentance of the rash words which had led to the great crime, and gave him absolution.

Once more Henry knelt before the tomb of the saint, and removing his cloak, received from each bishop and abbot who was present five stripes from the *palai*, or monastic rod, while with tears and sobs he continued to lament his grievous error.

With bare feet and aching shoulders, he spent the whole night in the cathedral fasting; at early matins he again offered up his prayers; and finally, after hearing mass, returned to London, having accomplished the fulness of his humiliation, and satisfied, as was believed, the offended spirit of the martyr.¹

¹ Grim, 86.





CHAPTER VII.

THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS.

“ Then longen folk to go on pilgrimages,
And specially from every shire's end
Of England, to Canterbury they wind,
The holy blissful martyr for to seek,
That them hath holpen when that they were sick.”

—CHAUCER.

INDIRECTLY we owe to Becket the first great poem written in the English language by the first great English poet ; we refer to the “ Canterbury Tales ” of Geoffrey Chaucer. It would be difficult to find a stronger illustration of the wide-spread renown of the murdered Archbishop than a poem whose inspiration was due to the great popularity of his shrine.

Within a very few years after the “ martyrdom,” the fame of the miracles wrought at Becket's tomb extended over all Christendom. The Papal court had taken advantage of the popular enthusiasm to add a new name to the calendar ; and as “ Saint Thomas of Canterbury,” the Archbishop was revered by innumerable worshippers. Dean Stanley remarks, that there is not a country in Europe which does not exhibit traces of Becket.¹ A church was dedicated to him at Rome ; another

¹ Dean Stanley's “ Historical Memorials,” 153.

at Lyons; a third at St Lo, in Normandy; a fourth at Acre, in Syria. His relics were preserved at Florence, at Lisbon, at Verona, and in the Roman basilica of St Maria Maggiore. In the glorious painted windows of St Ouen, Sens, and Chartres, the story of his life is vividly depicted. Throughout Scotland he was honoured; while in England there was hardly a county which did not possess some church or convent associated with his name.

But the centre of devotion was necessarily Canterbury; where the principal objects of veneration were the wooden altar which marked the site of the murder, and the tomb in the crypt in which his remains were deposited. To this latter spot did the pilgrims chiefly resort; and there, in 1174, King Henry performed his penance; there, on the 21st of August 1179, Louis VII. gave thanks to the saint for the intercession which, as he believed, had saved his son when sick unto death. Cœur de Lion, on his release from his Austrian dungeon, walked all the way from Sandwich to Canterbury to return thanks to "God and St Thomas."

In 1220, when the cathedral was reconstructed, a new shrine was prepared for the remains of the people's saint, on the site of an ancient altar of the Holy Trinity where Becket had been accustomed to celebrate mass. The ceremony of translation took place on Tuesday the 7th of July, and was performed with a splendour previously unknown in England. The surrounding villages, we are told, were full—

"Of bishops and abbots, priors and parsons,
Of earls and of barons, and of many knights thereto;
Of sergeants and of squires, and of husbandmen enow,
And of simple men eke of the land—so thick thither drew."¹

Among those present were the young King, Henry III., Pandulf, Bishop of Norwich, the Archbishop of Rheims, Hubert

¹ Robert of Gloucester, 2848-2852.

de Burgh, Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, and the leading English nobles and prelates.

Then began "the long succession of pilgrimages which, for three centuries, gave Canterbury a place amongst the great resorts of Christendom, and which, through Chaucer's poem, have given it a lasting hold on the memory of Englishmen as long as English literature exists." The pilgrims approached Canterbury by three great routes. Those from abroad landed at Sandwich, and proceeded along the fertile and picturesque valley of the Stour. Others started from Southampton, and made their way across the Surrey Downs, by Farnham, Guildford, Reigate, Merstham, Titsey, Cnevening, Westham, Otford, Halling, Snodland, Thurnham, Harrietsham, Lenham, Charing, and Harbledown. In many places the "Pilgrim's Lane," as it is called, may still be traced.

But the main route was from London; and this is the route described by Chaucer, who shows us, in his immortal poem, that it was thronged with pilgrims of every class, except the highest and the lowest. They started from the Tabard Inn, now the Talbot, in High Street, Southwark, where—

"The chambers and the halls were wide;"

and, with the noise of singing, and the sound of piping, and the jingling of "Canterbury bells," rode joyously through town and village, up green hills and across fertile meadows, a blithe and lively company, until they came in sight of the cathedral tower, and then their joyousness gave place to hymns, and prayers, and telling of beads.

With Chaucer as our guide, we may examine the different members of the pilgrim-troop. First and foremost came the *Knight*—

"A worthy man,
That fro the time that he firste began
To reden out, he lovèd chivalrie,
Truthe and honour, fredom and curtesie. . . .

Though that he was worthy, he was wise ;
And of his port, as meke as is a mayde :
He never yet in vilainie ne sayde,
In all his life, unto no manere wight ;
He was a veray parfit gentil knight."

Second in rank we may count the *Squire*—

" A lover, and a lusty bachelor,
With lockès crull [curled] as they were laide in presse.
Of twenty yere of age he was, I gesse ;
Of his stature he was of even lengthe,
And wonderly deliver, and grete of strengthe ;
And he hadde be[en] sometime in chevactrie¹
In Flanders, in Artois, and in Picardie,
And borne him wel, as of so litel space,
In hope to standen in his lady's grace."

He was attended, we are told, by a *Yeoman*, who was clad in coat and hood of green, carried a sheaf of peacock-arrows "bright and keen;" had a head round as a nut, and was, altogether, a stalwart and comely fellow.

Fourth in the company rode—

" A *Nonne*, a *Prioress*,
That of hire smiling was full simple and coy ;
Her gretest oath was but by Seint Eloy. . . .
Ful wel she sangè the service divine,
Entunèd in hire nose ful swetely ;
And Frenche she spake ful fayre and fetisly²
After the scole of Stratford attè Bowe,
For Frenche of Paris was to hire unknowe."

Of course, a *Monk* was not wanting, a manly man, full able to do justice to an abbot's state:—

" Ful many a deintè hors hadde he in stable ;
And when he rode, men mighte his bridel here
Gingeling, in a whistling wind, as clear
And eke as loude as doth the chappell belle,
Ther as this lord was keper of the celle."

¹ On an expedition.

² Dexterously, neatly.

Next came a *Merchant*, with a forked beard, clothed in motley garb, with high boots reaching to his knees, and a Flemish beaver hat upon his head.

The *Clerk* "of Oxenford" must not be omitted in our quotations :—

"As lenè was his horse as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake,
But looked holive, and thereto soberly.
Full threadbare was his overest courtepy,¹
For he hadde gotten him yet no benefice ;
He was nought worldly to have an office.
For him was lever han, at his bedde hed,
Twenty bokès clothed in black or red,
Of Aristotle and his philosophie,
Than robes riche, or fidel, or sautrie.
But all be that he was a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre ;
But all that he might of his frendes hente,²
On bokès and on lerning he it spente ;
And besily gave for the soules praie
Of him that gave him wherewith to scolaie.
Of studie tokè he most care and hede ;
Not a word spake he more than was nede,
And that was said in forme and reverence,
And short and quike, and full of high sentence."³

Passing over the *Haberdasher*, *Carpenter*, *Webber* or *Weaver*, *Dyer*, and *Tapiser*, who were all suitably attired according to the livery of their respective guilds, we extract the poet's description of the *Franklin*, or country gentleman :—

"White was his berd as is the daylsie ;⁴
Of his complexion he was sanguin ;⁴
Well loved he by the morne⁵ a sop in wine,
To liven in delit was e'er his wine ;⁶

¹ His short overcoat.

² Lofty sentiment.

³ Morning,

⁴ Borrowed.

⁵ Pronounced *day-e-sie*, and *san-gu-in*.

⁶ Wont or custom.

For he was Epicurès owen son,
That held opinion that plein delit
Was veraity felicity parfite.
An householder, and that a grete, was he ;
Saint frebair he was in his contree.
His brede, his ale, was always after on ;
A better envyned man was no wher non.
Withouten bake mete never was his hous,
Of fish and flesh, and that so plenteous,
It mewed in his hous of mete and drinke,
Of all the denitees that men could of thinke
After the sondry sesons of the year,
So changèd he his mete and his soupere."

The portrait of the *Wife of Bath* is sketched with an infinitely sly humour :—

" A good wife was ther of beside Bathe ;
But she was som del defe, and that was scathe.
Of clothe-making she hadde swiche an haunt,
She passed hem of Ipres, and of Gaunt.
In all the parish, wif ne was ther non
That to the offering before hire should gon ;
And if ther did, certain so wroth was she,
That she was out of alle charitee.
Hire coverchiefs weren ful fine of ground
(I dorste swere they weyeden a pound),
That on the Sonday were upon hire hede :
Hir hosen weren of fine scarlet rede,
Full streekyteyed, and shoon ful moist and newe.
Bold was hire face, and fayre and rede of hew.
She was a worthy woman all hire live :
Housebondes, at the chirche dore, had she had five.
Upon an ambler esily she sat,
Ywimpled well ; and on hire hede an hat
As brode as is a bokeler, or a targe ;
A fore-mantel about hir hippès large ;
And on hire fete a pair of spurrès sharpe."

A few lines must be given to the *Miller*, and the *Reeve* or *Steward*:—

“ The miller was a stout cast for the nones ;
 Full bigge he was of braun, and eke of bones,
 That proved wel ; for over all ther he came,
 At wrastling he wold bere away the ram.
 He was short shuldered, brode, a thikke guarre ;
 Ther was no dooe that he n’olde heve of barre,
 Or breke it at a renning with his hede.
 His berd as any sowe or fox was rede,
 And that’s brode, as though it were a spade.
 The Reve was a slendre, colerike man ;
 His berd was shave as neighe as ever he can ;
 His here was by his eres round shorne ;
 His fop was docked like a preest beforme ;
 Full longe were his legges, and ful lene,
 Ylike a staff ; there was no calf ysene.
 Well coude he kepe a garner and a binne ;
 There was non auditour coude on him winne.
 Wel wiste he, by the drought and by the rain
 The yelding of his seed and of his grain.
 His lordes shepe, his nete [cattle], and his deirie [dairy],
 His swine, his hors, his store, and his puttrie,
 Were holly in this Reves governing ;
 And by his covenant yare he reckening,
 Sin that his lord were twenty yere of age,
 There coude no man bring him in arerage.”

And, finally, our sketch of the various members of Chaucer’s Canterbury party would be incomplete without the *Sompnour*:—

“ A Sompnour was ther with us in that place,
 That hadde a fire-red cherumbimnes face,
 With scalled browes blake, and pilled berd :
 Of his visage children were sore aferd.
 Ther was quicksilver, litarge, ne brimston,
 Boras, ceruse, ne oil of tartre non,
 Ne ointment that wolde clense or bite,
 That him might helpen of his whelbes white,

Ne of the knobbes sitting on his chekes.
Wel loved he garlike, onions, and lekes,
And for to drink strong win as rede as blood ;
Than wold he speke and crie as he were wood ;
And when that he wel dronken had the win,
Than would he speken no word but Latin." ¹

The route taken by this motley company is also indicated in the poem. From London they went, by way of Deptford and Greenwich, to Rochester, and thence to Sillingbourne, where it seems to have been usual to halt for refreshment. Afterwards they traversed what was then the forest of Bleau, ascended the hill at "Boughton under Blee," and through the little town of Harbledown,—“ycleped,” in Chaucer’s time, “Bob-up-and-down,”—reached Canterbury.

The greatest crowds were naturally assembled on the jubilees or fiftieth anniversaries of the translation, of which it will be seen that six occurred between the first consecration of the shrine and its final overthrow (1270, 1320, 1370, 1420, 1470, 1520). It is recorded that in 1420, the last but two, as many as a hundred thousand persons were brought together from all parts of the Continent, but chiefly from the British territories, by the surpassing renown of the great martyr. The objects of their principal veneration, we are told, were the wooden altar in the transept of the Martyrdom, and the relics exhibited by its attendant priest, including the “rusty fragment of Le Bret’s sword ;” the old Norman crypt, and another collection of relics, such as part of St Thomas’s skull, and his hair-cloth shirt and drawers ; and the shrine itself, blazing with gold and silver and jewels.

“The lower part,” says Dean Stanley,² “was of stone, supported on arches ; and between these arches the sick and lame

¹ Chaucer’s Poetical Works, “The Canterbury Tales,” ed. Morris.

² Dean Stanley, pp. 182, 183. Cf. Nichol’s “Erasmus,” pp. 166, 167.

pilgrims were allowed to ensconce themselves, rubbing their rheumatic backs or diseased legs and arms against the marble which brought them into the nearest contact with the wonder-working body within. The shrine properly so called rested on these arches, and was at first invisible. A wooden canopy, probably painted outside with sacred pictures, suspended from the roof, concealed it. At a given signal this canopy was drawn up by ropes, and the shrine then appeared blazing with gold and jewels. The wooden sides were plated with gold, and damasked with gold wire, and embossed with innumerable pearls and jewels and rings, cramped together on this gold ground."

The finest of these jewels was the great carbuncle or diamond, said to be as large as a hen's egg, and known by the name of the "Regale of France," which Louis VII. had offered in 1179.

But as time rolled on, bringing with it its inevitable changes; as the mind of the nation threw off, one after the other, the trammels of a degrading superstition; as the leaven of Lollardism spread through the social mass; the glory of St Thomas decayed, and the Canterbury pilgrims yearly grew fewer in number. Of those who visited the famous shrine, many were actuated by no spirit of belief, but by a sceptical curiosity, as in the case of Erasmus and Dean Colet, who, overawed as they were by the majestic beauty of the cathedral, regarded Becket's relics with mild scorn, and the splendid offerings at his altar with a feeling of irritation that such vast treasures should lie in useless accumulation.

In 1520 Henry VIII. and Charles V. of Germany were visitors to the cathedral, and, in all probability, said their prayers before the Archbishop's shrine. A few years later (1536), Henry forbade the observance of the Eve of St Thomas. In 1538 a heavier blow was dealt at the "martyr's" memory. By order of Henry, a kind of inquisition was held into his life

and character ; and the verdict going against him, sentence was pronounced by the then Archbishop of Canterbury to the effect that his bones should be publicly burnt, and the offerings made at his shrine forfeited to the Crown.

In September of the same year, the royal commission, under Dr Leyton, charged with the destruction of shrines, arrived at Canterbury ; and the shrine before which so many thousands of pilgrims had worshipped was quickly demolished. And this proceeding was justified, on the 16th of November, by a proclamation carefully setting forth all the charges against the Archbishop invented by his bitterest enemies, and declaring ¹—

“For these, and for other urgent reasons, long to recite, the King’s majesty, by the advice of his council, hath thought expedient to declare to his loving subjects, that notwithstanding Becket’s canonisation, there appeareth nothing in his life and exterior conversation² whereby he should be called a saint, but rather esteemed a traitor and rebel to his prince. Therefore his Grace straightly chargeth and commandeth, that henceforth the said Thomas Becket shall not be esteemed, named, reputed, nor called a saint, but ‘Bishop Becket,’ and that his images and pictures throughout the realm shall be put down and avoided out of all churches, and chapels, and other places ; and that from henceforth the days used to be festivals in his name shall not be observed, nor the service, office, antiphonies, collects, and prayers in his name read, but razed and put out of all books.”

And thus did the “whirligig of time” bring its revenges. The Crown now triumphed over the Church, because the Church had ceased to be the protector, or to secure the support, of the commons. Becket’s work had long been done ; for, from the day that Magna Charta became a fact in the land, his work was put aside as a thing of the past. None of his

¹ Wilkins’s “Concilia,” iii. 847, 848.

² *i.e.*, conduct.

successors, except Stephen Langton, to whom Magna Charta (as we shall see) was mainly owing, ever dared to stand forward the avowed adversary of the Crown ; or, if they did, utter and signal failure attended their unwise ambition. Even Langton himself probably believed that the shrine would endure long after Magna Charta had been swept away. But we see, says Dean Stanley,¹ what he could not see ; that the Charter has lasted because founded on the eternal laws of truth, and justice, and freedom ; that the shrine has vanished because it represented a victory which was soon eclipsed by other and nobler victories, and because it was identified with a creed which the growing intelligence of the nation refused any longer to accept.

¹ Dean Stanley's "Historical Memorials," p. 206.



CHRONOLOGICAL LANDMARKS

FROM THE

DEATH OF BECKET TO THE DEATH OF LANGTON.

- A.D. 1171. Henry II. visits Ireland, and receives the homage of the native princes. The remainder of his reign is occupied in the extension of English authority over that island.
- A.D. 1172. Prince Henry is crowned a second time at Westminster, and thenceforward is called "King." His sons revolt against Henry II., and are abetted by Queen Eleanor, who is therefore thrown into prison. Louis of France, William of Scotland, and Philip, Earl of Flanders, join the confederacy, and the allied armies enter Normandy. Through the celerity of Henry's movements, the King of France said of him, "He neither rides nor sails, but flies like a bird." They are defeated; while a Scottish invasion of England is repulsed by Richard de Lacy, the Justiciary, and Humphrey de Bohun, the Constable.
- A.D. 1174. Henry II. does penance at the shrine of Becket. Capture of the King of Scotland, and total defeat of the confederacy.
- A.D. 1176. Council of Northampton, at which England is divided into judicial districts, six in number, nearly identical with our modern circuits. Ranulf de Glanville, the great lawyer, is soon afterwards appointed Chief Justiciary.
- A.D. 1180. Death of Louis of France.
- A.D. 1183. Quarrel between Prince Henry and his brothers Richard and Geoffrey, ending in the revolt of Henry and Geoffrey against the King. The former is suddenly taken ill, and dies, asking and obtaining his father's forgiveness. Geoffrey retires to the French court, where he dies in 1186.

- A.D. 1185. Heraclius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, visits England to urge upon King Henry a crusade for the deliverance of the Holy City. His council persuades him to remain at home.
- A.D. 1187. Jerusalem is captured by the Saracen monarch, Saladin.
- A.D. 1188. Henry, in concert with Philip Augustus of France, resolves to take the cross, and levies an enormous tribute for this purpose. But Philip espousing the cause of Richard in a new war against his father, the crusade is suspended; and Henry, weakened in frame and broken in spirit, yields every concession demanded of him.
- A.D. 1189. Retires in despair to his castle of Chinon, and dies on the 6th July. Richard is crowned at Westminster on the 3d of September, with circumstances of unusual pomp, but also with unusual omens of evil. At mid-day a bat fluttered round the royal throne; the bells at nightfall rung out a peal without the help of human hands; and some of the leading Jews having been tempted by curiosity to enter the Abbey, were discovered, stripped of their clothes, and beaten almost unto death. The incident revived the old hatred of the populace against the proscribed race, and a general massacre and plunder took place in London. The other cities and towns, says Richard of Devizes, emulated the faith of the Londoners, and, with a like devotion, despatched their blood-suckers with blood to hell. Winchester alone, its people being wary and circumspect, and always acting mildly, spared its vermin. It never did anything with too great haste. Fearing nothing more than to repent, it considers the result of everything beforehand, temperately concealing its uneasiness until it becomes possible, at a fitting time, to cast out the whole cause of the disease at once and for ever."¹
- A.D. 1190. During Richard's reign, it is to be remarked that the fusion of English and Norman was almost completed; that the commoners grew rapidly in wealth, power, and influence; and that a spirit of sympathy between them and the more liberal and enlightened of the nobles was on several occasions manifest. This was largely due to the crusading follies of Richard, which compelled him to make many concessions in return for the pecuniary aids he was always in need of. He entered upon

¹ Richard of Devizes, A.D. 1189.

the crusades with the vanity of a knight-errant, and conducted them with knightly courage, but without the sagacity of a statesman or the prudence of a great king. Accompanied by Philip of France, he set out on his first expedition to the Holy Land in the midsummer of 1178. At Messina he extorted 40,000 ounces of gold, as his sister's dowry, from Tancred, King of Sicily, and betrothed his nephew Arthur to Tancred's daughter. He quarrels with the French King, refuses to marry Philip's sister, Adelicia, and takes to wife Berengaria, daughter of the King of Navarre.

A.D. 1191. Richard captures the island of Cyprus, and marries Berengaria at Lyomasol. Sails for Acre on the 6th of June, besieges that important city, and, in spite of the efforts of Saladin, captures it after a terrible loss of life. Philip returns to France, disgusted by the superior fame of Richard, and begins his subtle schemes for the conquest of the Anglo-French dominions. After his departure, Richard, with an army reduced to 30,000 men, marches along the sea-coast to Jaffa, and at Assur, on the 7th of September, gains a signal victory over Saladin. His extraordinary prowess astonishes the Moslems, who name him the "Melech Ric." He reaches Jaffa, but, after a long rest, is compelled, by famine and sickness, to retreat to Ascalon.

A.D. 1192. In England, the nation is divided into two parties—one faithful to the absent Richard, the other favouring the pretensions which Prince John puts forward to the crown. The former is headed by the Chancellor, William de Longchamp, Bishop of Ely, who has grown unpopular through his pride and rapacity,¹ and is therefore deposed and banished by a council held in London: "a remarkable assumption of power by that assembly, and the earliest authority for a leading principle of our constitution, the responsibility of ministers to Parliament."² At this council, or meeting, not only the nobles, but the citizens and the general populace attended, to the number of 10,000 men.

Intelligence of these movements reaches Richard in Palestine, and greatly disturbs that rude, ferocious, and unkingly

¹ Roger of Hoveden, ed. Stubbs, A.D. 1192.

² Hallam's "Middle Ages," li 325.

warrior ; who, however, in the spring, renews his campaign against the Turks, and marches upon Jerusalem. In this campaign he performs "prodigies of valour," which become the theme of troubadours and wandering minstrels. With his lance for a hunting-spear, he attacks and kills an enormous bear. In single combat he beats down the most famous Saracen warriors. But his army being weakened by disease, and constant disputes arising between the leaders, he is compelled to retreat to Acre. Here the news reaches him of the capture of Jaffa by Saladin, and he immediately hastens to the relief of the Christians who still hold the citadel. This bold enterprise he successfully accomplishes, with a handful of knights and soldiers ; and then concludes a truce for three years with Saladin, by which the Christian pilgrims are allowed free access to Jerusalem. Richard now determines to return to England, and sails from Acre on the 9th of October. Landing at Ragusa, he traverses the territory of his foe, the Duke of Austria ; is recognised, and taken prisoner at a little village, and sent to the Castle of Tyernsteign. Being sold by the Duke to the Emperor of Germany, he is consigned to a castle in the Tyrol.

- A.D. 1193. England is thrown into a state of great excitement by the tidings of the imprisonment of its King, and active exertions are made for his release. Through Longchamp, the ex-Chancellor, he is brought before the Imperial Diet at Hagonau, where he defends himself so vigorously against the accusations of his enemies, that his chains were removed and his liberty granted, on condition of payment of one hundred thousand marks as a ransom. A delay of several months takes place before this sum is raised in England : and it is not until after a captivity of one year, six weeks, and three days that the royal "soldier of fortune" obtains his release, and returns to England, where his arrival causes great dismay to Prince John and his partisans.
- A.D. 1194. Richard finds his kingdom impoverished and discontented, and a dangerous spirit of impatience prevailing among the inhabitants of the great towns. In London this spirit is very formidable, and obtains a representative in the person of a popular hero, William Fitz-Osbert, or William Longbeard.

A.D. 1196. William Longbeard repairs to Normandy, and demands King Richard's protection for himself and the people. He informed his sovereign of certain great oppressions and excessive outrages used by rich men against the poor (namely, the worshipful of the city, the mayor and aldermen), who, in their lustings, when any tallage was to be gathered, burdened the poor further than was thought reason, to ease themselves ; whereupon the said William, being "a seditious person," and of a "busy nature," ceased not to make complaints.¹ That such complaints were possible, however, and that the commons could find a leader and a spokesman, show how the spirit of the times had changed since the reign of William, and how great an advance had been made by the people in a single century. William Longbeard, however, met with the fate of most popular leaders in that unscrupulous age. On his return to London, he was seized in the Church of St Mary-le-Bow, Cheapside, stabbed, and afterwards hanged.

The disorganised condition of England at this time is proved by the history of the forest outlaw, so widely celebrated in song and ballad under the well-known name of Robin Hood. However mythical may be many or all of his exploits, as recorded in the old ballads, there can be no question that he was a real personage, and that he was a type of the numerous popular leaders who, at this epoch, found an asylum in the forest depths, and there maintained the great struggle of the oppressed against the oppressors, of the commons against the crown.

A.D. 1197. The last three years of Richard's reign were employed in restoring his supremacy over England, where numerous castles were held by the creatures of his brother John, and in driving Philip of France out of Normandy, Maine, and Touraine. His death was singularly in keeping with his wild and wayward life. The Vicomte de Limoges having discovered a treasure of gold and silver on his estate, refused to surrender the whole at the King's demand. Richard immediately laid siege to the Vicomte's castle of Limoges ; and when the garrison offered to capitulate if their lives were spared, he swore that he would take them by storm, and hang them all ;

¹ Holinshed.

and accordingly the knights and men-at-arms returned to the castle in sorrow and confusion, and prepared to make a defence. While reconnoitring the fortifications, he was wounded in the arm by an arrow from the bow of Bertrand de Gurdun. The castle being taken, Richard ordered all its defenders to be hung, except the man who had wounded him. The barbed arrow-head, rankling in his flesh, induced mortification, and finding himself dying, the King ordered Bertrand to be brought before him. "What ill have I done to you," he said, "that you have killed me?" "You slew," said the soldier, "my father and my two brothers with your own hand, and you intend now to slay *me*; therefore take any revenge upon me that you may think fit, for I will readily endure the greatest torments you can devise, so long as you have met with your end, after having inflicted so many and so great injuries upon the world."

Richard, admiring the youth's boldness, said, "I forgive you my death," and ordered him to be released. But no sooner had the King yielded up his last breath than Bertrand was flayed alive, and then hanged.

It seems desirable, at this period, to pause, and briefly consider the condition of English government under the Norman Kings. In so doing, we shall follow Mr Hallam as an accurate authority, and our remarks will be condensed from his moderate and learned pages.¹

The Norman government was not a sanguinary despotism. Henry II. was a prince of remarkable clemency;² and none of the Conqueror's successors were so grossly tyrannical as himself. But the system of rapacious extortion from their subjects prevailed to a degree which we would rather expect to find among Eastern slaves than that high-spirited race of Normandy whose renown then filled Europe and Asia. The right of wardship was abused by selling the heir and his land to the highest bidder. That of marriage was carried to a still grosser excess. The Kings of France, indeed, claimed the prerogative of forbidding the marriage of their vassals' daughters to such persons as they thought unfriendly or

¹ Hallam's "Middle Ages," ii. 319-322.

² As compared with others of his race.

dangerous to themselves ; but we are not aware that they ever compelled them to marry, much less that they turned this attribute of sovereignty into a means of revenue. But in England, women and even men, simply as tenants-in-chief, and not as wards, were fined by the crown for leave to marry whom they would, or not to be compelled to marry whom they would not. An unwelcome suitor was frequently forced upon a wealthy maiden, in order that she might pay a heavy sum to escape from his addresses. Towns were fined for original grants of privileges, and again for repeated confirmations. The Jews were fined in exorbitant sums for the enjoyment of the commonest rights of mankind. Men were fined for the King's good-will ; or that he would remit his anger ; or that he would mediate between them and their adversaries.

But the most nefarious of all abuses was the open perversion of justice. Men were fined to have right done to them ; to sue in a certain court ; to implead a certain person ; to obtain possession of land which they had recovered at law. Fines were received for the King's help against the adverse suitor, that help being determined by the amount of the bribe, and not by the justice of the cause.

Let us now inquire what prerogative these Norman Kings were wont to exercise in raising money, and in general legislation.

By the prevailing feudal customs, the lord was entitled to demand a pecuniary aid from his vassals in certain cases. These were, in England, to make his son a knight (which might be done in his fifteenth year), to marry his eldest daughter (which might be done in her seventh), and to ransom himself from captivity. When such circumstances occurred, aids were accordingly levied by the crown upon its tenants, at the rate of twenty shillings for every knight's fee. *Escuage*, moreover, which was a commutation in money for the personal service of military tenants in war, was levied by the King, and levied, up to the reign of John, without the consent of Parliament.

None but military tenants could be liable for *escuage* ; but the inferior subjects of the crown were oppressed by *tallages*. The demesne lands of the King and all royal towns were

liable to tallage—an imposition far severer and more irregular than any which fell upon the higher classes. Tallages were continually raised upon different towns during all the Norman reigns without the consent of Parliament, which neither represented them, nor cared for their interests. The itinerant justices in their circuit usually set this tax. Sometimes the tallage was assessed in gross upon a town, and collected by the burgesses ; sometimes individually, at the judgment of the justices.

Customs upon the export and import of merchandise were immemorably exacted by the crown, and there is no appearance that these originated with Parliament. Another tax, extending to all the lands of the kingdom, was *Danegeld*, the ship-money of those times. Its imposition appears to have been at the King's will.

The right of general legislation was undoubtedly placed in the King, conjointly with his great council, or, more correctly speaking, with their advice. But the limits of legislative power were indefinite in the extreme. New laws, like new taxes, affecting the community, required the sanction of that assembly, which was supposed to represent it ; but individuals had no security against the most tyrannical exercise of the royal prerogative.

In a word, the statutes of the reigns of the English Kings, down to the epoch of Magna Charta, do not exhibit many provisions calculated to maintain the liberty of the people on a broad and general foundation. "The people, however," says Hallam, "had begun to look back to a more ancient standard of law. The Norman Conquest, and all that ensued upon it, had endeared the memory of their Saxon government. Its disorders were forgotten, or, rather, were less odious to a rude nation, than the coercive justice by which they were afterwards restrained. Hence, it became the favourite cry to demand the laws of Edward the Confessor ; and the Normans themselves, as they grew dissatisfied with the royal administration, fell into these English sentiments. But what these laws were, or, more properly, perhaps, those customs subsisting in the Confessor's age, was not very distinctly understood. No far, however, was clear, that the rigorous feudal servitude,

the weighty tributes upon poorer freemen, had never prevailed before the Conquest. In claiming the laws of Edward the Confessor, our ancestors meant but the *redress of grievances*, which tradition told them had not always existed."

- A. D. 1199. King John arrives at Westminster on Ascension Day, May 27. By the strict principle of hereditary succession, the crown ought to fall to Arthur, the son of Geoffrey, as *third* son of Henry II., while John is *fifth* son. In England and Normandy, however, the claim of John, as *nearer of kin* to Henry, is admitted. On the other hand, Maine, Touraine, and Anjou espouse the cause of the young Plantagenet, and are supported by Philip of France, who sees in the movement a probable opportunity of expelling the English from their continental dominions, though professing a desire to restore Arthur to his rightful inheritance :—

" Philip of France, in right and true behalf
Of thy deceased brother Geoffrey's son,
Arthur Plantagenet, lays most lawful claim
To this fair island, and the territories ;
To Ireland, Poitiers, Anjou, Touraine, Maine ;
Desiring thee to lay aside the sword
Which sways usurpingly these several titles,
And put the same into young Arthur's hand,
Thy nephew and right royal sovereign." ¹

John repairs to Normandy, and levies an army to defend his dominions. After a war of eight months, he and Philip agree to an armistice.

- A. D. 1200. Peace concluded on 23d May. Philip abandons the claims of Arthur, who is compelled to do homage to his uncle for Brittany. John betrothes his niece, Blanche of Castile, to Philip's son, Lewis. Passing through Aquitaine, he sees the beautiful betrothed of Hugh, Count of La Marche ; carries her off, marries her, and causes her to be crowned Queen.
- A. D. 1201-3. The Count of La Marche heads an insurrection against King John in Poitou and Aquitaine, and secures the assistance of Philip. After a prolonged struggle, in which the military

¹ Shakespeare, "King John," act i., scene 1.

incapacity of the English King is signally displayed, he loses Normandy, Anjou, Touraine, and Maine. In the contest the young Prince Arthur becomes involved, and is captured at Mirabeau, near Poitiers, by his uncle (August 15). The exact circumstances of his fate are shrouded in mystery, but that he was murdered, and murdered at John's command, there can be little doubt.

King John is thereupon summoned to appear before Philip, as lord paramount of Normandy, and when he does not appear, "is found guilty of felony and treason, and therefore adjudged to forfeit all the lands he held by homage."

- A. D. 1204-6. With an overwhelming force, Philip quickly carries out the sentence pronounced by his own court, and captures, one after another, the great towns and fortresses of Normandy. He continues his victorious career, until, of all the French possessions of the Plantagenets, Aquitaine alone remains. So far as the best interests of England were concerned, it was not to be regretted that she was severed from continental quarrels, but the mode of separation was undoubtedly galling to every Englishman; and the remembrance of this period of disaster inspired our Kings in their after-attempts to re-establish their power and influence in France.
- A. D. 1207. Stephen Langton is appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. The King, having nominated John de Gray, Bishop of Norwich, is so enraged that he seizes on the monastery of Canterbury, banishes its monks, and appropriates its revenues. Pope Innocent addresses him in conciliatory terms, but is met with arrogant defiance.
- A. D. 1208. The result is an interdict launched against all the King's dominions in the Passion Week of 1208.
- A. D. 1209-10. John invades Ireland with a powerful army, and restores the rival barons and native chiefs to their obedience. He carries with him, it is said, "discreet men, skilled in the laws, by whose advice he commanded the laws of England to be observed in Ireland."
- A. D. 1211. Invasion of Wales. John penetrates to the foot of Snowdon, and receives eight-and-twenty young men as hostages from Llewelyn the Great.

A.D. 1213. John, not having made submission to the Pope, though personally excommunicated, is now, by an extraordinary act of Papal insolence, deposed from his throne, and all his vassals are absolved from allegiance to him. Two legates, Pandulf and Durand, proclaim this deposition of the King, in 1212, before a great assembly at Northampton. The kingdom is then promised by the Pope to Philip of France, who prepares to invade England; but an English fleet being hastily assembled, crosses the Channel, burns Fecamp and Dieppe, and compels Philip to delay his projected expedition. John, however, fails to take advantage of the favourable crisis, and, terrified by the threats of the Papal legate, offers his submission to the Pope, and takes an oath of fealty as his vassal (May 15). This cowardly action is done in defiance of the remonstrances of the great barons and prelates.

It is now notified to Philip that the English King has been received as a penitent son of the Church. Philip, nevertheless, resolves on an invasion, but fails to secure the co-operation of his vassal, Ferrand, Earl of Flanders, on whom, therefore, he makes war,; and Ferrand, being assisted by an English fleet, signally defeats him.

Meanwhile, the English barons in council at St Alban's declare that the laws of Henry I. ought to be observed; and in another council at London take an oath, under the influence of Stephen Langton, to maintain their liberties. They are supported to the uttermost by the citizens and yeomen.

A.D. 1214. A large army, under the Earl of Salisbury, is sent to the assistance of Ferrand of Flanders, who is also succoured by the Emperor of Germany and the Earl of Boulogne. The allied armies are met at Bouvines by Philip, with an inferior force, and totally defeated (July 27).

John, hastily concluding an ignominious peace, returns to England with a body of mercenaries, resolved, he says, to be, for the first time, King and Lord of England. Assisted by William Earl of Pembroke, Stephen Langton forms a confederacy against the despot, who is compelled to sign the Magna Charter, or Great Charter of English liberty, at

- A.D. 1215. Runnymede, on the 15th day of June 1215. "Never people in Europe," says Levysden, "have had the rights of monarchy better limited, with the preservation of the subject's liberty, than the English from this time."

John obtains from the Pope a bull excommunicating the barons, and commences a desultory warfare against them. Stephen Langton refuses to read the excommunication, and is suspended from his functions. Driven to desperate straits, the barons offer the crown of England to Louis, eldest son of the French King, who lands with a body of troops at Sandwich, in May 1216, and marches to London in triumphant procession. But by an imprudent and dishonest course of conduct he forfeits the confidence of the barons, and the issue of the struggle it is difficult to conjecture, when John dies of fever at Newark Castle, on the 18th of October, and the Earl of Pembroke assuming the regency, all England rallies to the national standard.

Accession of Henry III., who is crowned at Gloucester on the 28th of October.

- A.D. 1217. Louis returns to France, and at Lincoln, in April 1217, his army, under the Count of Perche, is totally defeated. A French fleet, under Eustace the Monk, is defeated by Herbert de Burgh, on the 24th of August, and the land has peace.

- A.D. 1219. Death of William Earl of Pembroke, who is succeeded in the regency by Herbert de Burgh, a statesman of severe disposition but wonderful energy.

During this reign the power of the commons constantly increases, and each time that the crown demands a grant of money, it is forced to grant some redress of grievance, or concede some fresh privilege. It is noticeable, too, that many of the barons are beginning to perceive, though dimly, that the interests of the commons, to a great extent, are identical with their own; and that it is to the advantage of both the authority of the crown should be considerably limited.

- A.D. 1223. By a papal bull Henry is declared of age, and competent for the performance of all royal acts.

- A.D. 1227. Expedition into France.

- A.D. 1228. Death of Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury.

TABLE OF CONTEMPORARY SOVEREIGNS.

SCOTLAND.

A.D. 1165.	William.		A.D. 1214.	Alexander II.
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FRANCE.

A.D. 1137-80.	Louis VII.		A.D. 1223.	Louis VIII.
A.D. 1180.	Philip II.		A.D. 1226.	Louis IX.

SPAIN.

A.D. 1162.	Alphonso II., of Aragon.		A.D. 1158.	Alphonso III., of Castile.
A.D. 1196.	Peter II., of Aragon.		A.D. 1194.	Sancho VII., of Navarre.

GERMANY.

A.D. 1152-91.	Frederick I.		A.D. 1209.	Otto IV.
A.D. 1191.	Henry VI.		A.D. 1212.	Frederick II.

POPES OF ROME.

A.D. 1159-81.	Alexander III.		A.D. 1188.	Clement III.
A.D. 1181.	Lucius III.		A.D. 1191.	Celestine III.
A.D. 1185.	Urban III.		A.D. 1198.	Innocent III.
A.D. 1187.	Gregory VIII.		A.D. 1216.	Honorius III.
			A.D. 1227.	Gregory IX.



BOOK II.

STEPHEN LANGTON.

A.D. 1170-1228.

CHAPTER I.

THE OPENING OF A GREAT CAREER.

“From this era a new soul was infused into the people of England.”

—HALLAM.

STEPHEN LANGTON is an honoured name in English history, and yet we neither know the place nor the date of his birth. From a letter of Pope Innocent's we learn that he was of good parentage,—“Natus est de parentibus tibi fidelibus et devotis;” and it is probable enough, as Dean Hook suggests, that he belonged to the Yorkshire Langtons,¹ both because his brother was elected to the northern primacy, and because he himself was preferred at an unusually early age in York Minster.²

He received his education at the University of Paris, which, in the thirteenth century, bore a great reputation as a school of

¹ Dean Hook's “Lives of the Archbishops,” ii. 659.

² It is, however, generally stated that he derived his name from Langton, near Spilsby.

theology. His natural abilities soon made him conspicuous, and as these were combined with an indomitable will and an ardent industry, he soon rose into distinction, not only as a biblical scholar, but as a poet, and as a man profoundly versed in the old scholastic philosophy. Partly his parentage, and partly his renown, secured him two rich prebends, one in Nôtre Dame, and the other in York Cathedral; and such was his renown among the doctors of the University, that he was elected Dean of Rheims, and Chancellor or President of the schools of Paris.

As a student of the university he made the acquaintance of an Italian noble named Lothaire, a kinsman of Pope Clement III., who, at the early age of twenty-eight, made him a cardinal of Rome. Lothaire soon afterwards ascended the Papal throne as Pope Innocent III., and, remindful of the genius and integrity of his former associate, he appointed him a member of his household, and summoned him to the "Eternal City."

It was with very great reluctance Langton quitted the shelter of the university, where he was free to pursue the studies he best loved, and where his learning, tact, and decision of character had gained him an extraordinary influence. At Rome he was received by the Pope with peculiar distinction. He lectured publicly, attracting large and brilliant audiences, among whom the Pope himself was frequently enrolled; and in recognition of his learning and ability, Innocent promoted him to be Cardinal-priest of St Chrysogonus (A.D. 1206). His preferment was regarded very favourably in England, and King John, though he afterwards pretended to look upon him as a stranger, addressed him a letter of congratulation.

We are not to suppose, says Dean Hook, that the office of a cardinal was so powerful and illustrious at this time as it afterwards became. The cardinals as yet had not assumed the red hat; this emblem of their dignity not being conceded to them

until 1245. Nor was the purple cloak assigned to them as their robe of office until 1464. It is probable, however, that they were allowed, even when not consecrated to the episcopate, to officiate *in pontificalibus*, for this privilege had been granted to many of the abbots, who ranked as their inferiors; and they were authorised, at all events within their cures, to pronounce the benedictions. That they were not superior to the legates is evident from the fact that Pandulf, who was never a cardinal, and who, during the period of his residence in England, was only sub-deacon, exercised authority over Langton himself. Nor were they addressed by the title of "Eminence," for this was only bestowed upon them by Urban VIII. in the year 1630. Still, they alone were eligible to the Papacy, according to a decree of Stephen IV. in 769; and by Nicholas II. it was enacted that by the cardinals alone should the Pope be elected. They had not, as yet, assumed a position of equality with princes of royal birth; and the Consistory, as now modelled, did not exist. But as the secret advisers of the sovereign Pontiff, whose object was to assert his supremacy over the civilised world, their power and influence were considerable. And though their venality had long been their shame, yet the very fact that it was considered worth while to bribe them, proves that their voice and vote were of importance in the various causes brought before the court of Rome.¹

It was shortly after Stephen Langton's acceptance of the cardinalate, and before he had been formally invested, that the tidings reached Rome of the death of Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury (July 13, 1205). The tidings were brought by the person who claimed to have been elected his successor, Reginald, the sub-prior of Canterbury, who had travelled across the Continent with great pomp, assuming the title of Archbishop-elect; and this he had done in direct

¹ Dean Hook, *ut ante*, ii. 662, 663.

violation of his oath before the Chapter, that he would keep the election secret until the Pope's favour had been gained.

For it is necessary to observe that the right of election to the archiepiscopal throne was fiercely disputed by no fewer than three parties ; the King, the monks of Christchurch in Canterbury, and the bishops in the jurisdiction of the metropolitan primacy. The struggle between the Church and the crown still continued, and at each election the monks stoutly asserted their traditional claim, though generally overborne by the prelates or the King. On the death of Hubert, therefore, the monks, without waiting for the royal license, hastily raised their sub-prior,—an unknown man, of no ability, of no force of character,—to the vacant see, and despatched him to Rome to gain the Papal sanction before King John could interfere. The plot was not ill designed, and had they chosen a man of more mark and weight, might possibly have succeeded. But the older monks of Christchurch, ashamed of the election, used their influence over their younger brethren to obtain its voidance. They solicited and received the consent of the crown, and proceeded, under the royal influence, to appoint John de Gray, a warlike prelate, whose influence in the King's councils was supreme.¹ The suffragan bishops approved of the choice, and John de Gray was formally enthroned in the actual presence of King John.

Reginald, therefore, had been but a short time in Rome before twelve monks of Christchurch appeared, on the part of John de Gray and his royal patron, to represent that his election had been cancelled, and to obtain the pall or pallium for the Bishop of Norwich (A.D. 1206). Almost simultaneously arrived a body of delegates from the suffragan bishops to maintain their claim to concurrent election ; *i.e.*, that the Chapter could not elect without their approval. Thus, contrary to the true

¹ Roger of Wendover, p. 194.

interests of the Church of England, the Roman Pontiff was placed in the position of supreme arbiter between these rival parties.

His first step was to decide in whom the right of election was really vested, and he quickly came to the conclusion that it belonged to the monks, and that the pretensions of despotic monarchs could not interfere with their ancient and prescriptive usage. In this decision he was certainly justified by precedent ; but we can hardly doubt it was also in accordance with his prepossessions. He could not but feel that the bishops would generally elect a prelate acceptable to the King ; the monks, a prelate acceptable to Rome.

Innocent and his councillors next proceeded to inquire into the validity of the recent elections. That of Reginald he immediately annulled, because it was irregularly made, and because it was not only made by a minority of the monks, but without the concurrence of the suffragan bishops. That of John de Gray he also annulled, but with somewhat more hesitation. The ground on which he acted was in truth untenable ; that John de Gray's election had taken place before Reginald's had been invalidated by competent authority. But it is obvious that, according to his own decision, the competent authority lay in the monks, in whom he had declared the right of election vested.

Having thus swept aside bishops, chapter, and king, Reginald the sub-prior, and the Bishop of Norwich, Innocent determined upon instituting a nominee of his own in the vacant primacy. His choice fell upon Stephen Langton, whose learning, blameless life, and exalted character, eminently fitted him for so important a position. It is impossible to doubt that the Pope, in making this fortunate selection, was influenced by a conscientious desire to place at the head of the English Church the best man he could find. It is equally impossible to doubt

that he supposed himself to have found in Langton a firm supporter of the claims of the Roman chair. But we shall see that though events justified his choice so far as the interests of the Church of England were concerned, they signally defeated his hope of securing a loyal and flexible servant of the Church of Rome.

Innocent commanded the twelve monks at Rome to proceed to the election of Stephen Langton. They pleaded an oath which John had forced them to take before leaving England, that they would elect no one but John de Gray. But when menaced with excommunication, they yielded, all except Elias of Bransfield, who endeavoured to win over Innocent to the King's side with a bribe—indignantly rejected—of three thousand marks.¹

Innocent, however, was not desirous of provoking a quarrel with John. He felt that his assumption of the right of nomination, and, more particularly, his nomination of a prelate who was almost a stranger, would be resented by the English King; and knowing him to be passionately fond of precious stones, he sent him a costly ring, enriched with many gems, and accompanied by a letter explaining their symbolic signification.² This letter was followed by a second, in which he announced the election of Stephen Langton, and recommended him to the royal favour as a man of unequalled scholarship and noble character, who would be a prudent adviser to the King in matters temporal or spiritual. And he added, that so highly did he himself esteem the new Primate, that it was with the greatest reluctance he had sent him to Canterbury. The Papal messengers, however, were stopped at Dover.³

Stephen's election took place in December 1206, but his consecration was deferred until Innocent could receive the

¹ Roger of Wendover, p. 212.

² Matthew Paris.

³ The Papal letters may be read in Wilkins' "*Concilia*," i. 515-517.

royal answer to his letters. In the following spring John's envoys arrived at Rome, conveying the epistles in which he had given expression to his violent indignation. He declared himself doubly insulted—insulted by the rejection of his counsellor, the Bishop of Norwich ; insulted by the appointment of a stranger like Langton, who had been bred up among his enemies in the realm of France. How was it, he asked, in bitter sarcasm, the Pope and his court did not remember the importance to them of the English alliance, and the fact that they drew more wealth from England than from any kingdom beyond the Alps? And he concluded with the threat that, if his wishes were not consulted, he would cut off all communication between England and Rome ; and when he needed advice, instead of seeking it out of his own dominions, would resort to the men of piety and learning who abounded in his court.

Innocent's anger rose at the King's menaces ; but while John's anger was hasty and petulant, the Pope's was dignified and enduring. He praised anew the learning and character of Langton in his reply ; reminded the King that the Primate could not be wholly unknown to him, inasmuch as he had written to him three times since his elevation to the cardinalate ; and warning him of the danger he would incur by rebelling against the Church. "Remember," he said, "that in this cause the glorious martyr St Thomas shed his blood."

Encouraged by the counsel of John de Gray, whom mortified pride converted into an uncompromising opponent of the claims of the Papacy, John still persisted in his opposition. He threatened that he would hang the Archbishop immediately on his arrival in England. In reply, Innocent ordered the consecration of Langton, which accordingly took place at Viterbo, in June 1207 ; and he directed William, Bishop of London, Eustace, Bishop of Ely, and Manzer, Bishop of Worcester, to make one more effort to obtain the royal acknowledg-

ment. If it were refused, he prepared to launch at the King and his realm the awful thunderbolt of an interdict.

John meanwhile had acted with unusual resolution, but with customary injustice. He poured out his anger not on the real offender, but on the monks who formed the Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral. In electing Langton, they had but availed themselves of a prescriptive right; and in obeying Innocent rather than the King, they had but done their duty as servants of the Church, and, moreover, had only yielded in order to avoid the punishment of excommunication. The King, however, confiscated their estates, sentenced them to banishment, and entrusted the performance of religious rites in the Cathedral to the clergy of the rival monastery of St Augustine's (July 5, 1207).¹

The threat of an interdict, which had brought Philip of France to the Pope's feet, began, however, to operate on the fears of the uncertain and wavering monarch. He endeavoured to evade the blow, but with characteristic want of honesty. Opening communications with the three bishops in January 1208, he informed them that he was ready to obey the Papal monition so far as his council should think advisable, and saving his royal dignity and the liberties of his crown. The latter phrase, "*salva dignitate regia, et libertatibus regiis*," was at least as objectionable as Becket's "saving the honour of God," and, like the latter, was intended to reserve full and entire freedom to act as he might think fit when the opportunity came. He also entered into correspondence with the Archbishop, and permitted his brother Simon to visit England, where he remained until Easter. An interview took place between him and the King, but, as we know from a royal letter to the men of Kent, without any satisfactory result.²

¹ Matthew Paris' "*Historia Major*," p. 224.

² It may reasonably be doubted, however, whether the King's account of the interview is wholly accurate.

"The King," wrote John, "to all the men of the whole of Kent, sends greeting. Know ye, that Master Simon of Langton came to us at Winchester, on the Wednesday next before Mid-Lent (March 12th), and, in the presence of our bishops, prayed us to receive Master Stephen Langton, his brother, as Archbishop of Canterbury. When we spoke to him of preserving our royal dignity in this matter, he replied that he would do nothing for us in respect to it, unless we placed ourselves altogether at his mercy. We make this known to you, that you may understand what ill and injury have been inflicted upon us. We command you to give credence to what Reginald of Cornhill¹ shall tell you on our behalf concerning the aforesaid transaction between ourself, the said bishops, and the said Simon, and concerning the due execution of our precept herein. Witness ourself at Winchester, the fourteenth day of March" (A.D. 1208).

Three days later, the Papal commissioners made a last effort to shake the King's determination, beseeching him with tears to acknowledge the Archbishop, to recall the exiled monks, and avoid the misery and degradation of an interdict. John broke out into one of those excesses of fury to which he was subject. He uttered the most terrible oaths against the Pope and the Cardinals; he swore "by the teeth of God" that if they dared to place his kingdom under an interdict, he would drive from it the whole of the bishops and clergy, and if he found any Roman priests in his dominions, would send them back to Rome with their eyes plucked out and their noses slit, that they might always bear about them the marks of their disgrace; and he threatened the prelates themselves with violence if they did not immediately quit his presence.

On the 23d of March the three bishops proclaimed the in-

¹ The King had entrusted him with the charge of the archbishopric and its revenues.

terdict, and then, somewhat pusillanimously, fled the country. Accompanied by the Bishops of Bath and Hereford, they took refuge in France, where, says Roger of Wendover,¹ they lived in abundance and luxury, and, instead of standing up as a defence for the Lord's honour, abandoned their flocks to the ravening wolf.²

The "ravering wolf" without delay confiscated the property of all among the clergy who, in obedience to the interdict, ceased to perform divine service in the churches. But the terrors of Rome prevailed.

For, as Dean Milman³ says, from Berwick to the British Channel, from the Land's End to Dover, the churches were closed, the bells silent; the only clergy who were seen stealing silently about were those permitted to baptize new-born infants with a hasty ceremony, or to hear the confession of the dying, and to administer to them, and to them alone, the holy Eucharist. The dead (and this, no doubt, was the affliction most keenly felt) were cast out of the towns, buried like dogs in some unconsecrated place—in a ditch or a dung-heap—without prayer, without the tolling-bell, without funeral rite. Those only can judge the effect of this fearful malediction who consider how completely, in the days of old, the entire life of every class of the people was affected—we may almost say, permeated—by the ritual and daily ordinances of the Church. Every important act was done under the counsel of the priest or the monk. Even to the less religious, the festivals of the Church were the only holidays, the processions of the Church the only spectacles, the ceremonies of the Church the only amusements. To those of deeper religion—to those, the far greater number, of abject superstition, who can tell how bitter must have been the anguish and humiliation to have their

¹ Roger of Wendover's "Flowers of History," p. 224.

² The Bishops of Salisbury and Rochester fled to Scotland.

children thus furtively baptized, and marriage unblessed, or hardly blessed;¹ the last pious attentions to the dead denied; to hear neither prayer nor chant; to look upon the world as surrendered to the unrestrained power of the devil and his evil spirits, with no saint to implore the mercy, no sacrifice to avert the wrath of God; when the cross was veiled, and the image concealed from view; the intercourse between God and man (apparently) broken off altogether, and souls left to perish, or but reluctantly permitted absolution in the instant of death.

At first John defied the interdict with ostentatious contempt, and regarded the public misery with supreme indifference. He availed himself of it to refill his exhausted coffers. He banished the bishops and priests who obeyed the Pope; seized the bishoprics and abbeys, and confiscated their estates; closed all the barns of the clergy, and marked them as belonging to the royal revenue; and declared every ecclesiastic who complied with the interdict out of the protection of the law, so that if assaulted or plundered, he sought redress in vain. If an outlaw who had robbed and slain a priest was brought into the royal presence, John ordered him to be released: "He has rid me," he would exclaim, "of an enemy." The marriage of the clergy had been long connived at, though their wives could not claim recognition from the Church. John cruelly seized these unhappy females, and extorted large sums for their ransom. In all these oppressions he seems to have been advised and supported by four great dignitaries of the Church; by Peter, Bishop of Winchester, John de Gray of Norwich, Philip of Durham, and the Abbot of Beaulieu. Hence the popular mind was greatly excited against them, and vented its rage in many a bitter lampoon and satirical song. In a singular Latin canticle

¹ Dr Lingard says, that sermons were preached in the churchyards, marriages and churchings performed in the church porch.

which has been handed down to the present time, they are assailed in the most opprobrious language :—

“ *In Norwicensis bestia !
Audi quid dicat veritas,
Qui non intrat per ostia
Fur est, an de hoc dubitas ?
Heu ! cecidisti gravius
Quam Cato quondam tertius ;
Cum præsumpta dicta
Justo ruat iudicis.
Excepta per dolum Simonis
Wintoniensis armiger,
Præsides ad Scaccarium,
Ad computandum impiger,
Piger ad evangelium ;
Regis revolvens rotulum,
Sic lucrum Lucam superat,
Marco, Marcum præponderat,
Et libræ librum subjicit.”*

It is difficult to render in modern English the extraordinary force and vigour of these scurrilous lines, but the meaning may, at all events, be indicated :—

“ *Thou, thou beast of Norwich !
Hear the words of truth :
Who enters not in at the gate
Is a thief ; of this dost thou doubt ?
Alas ! thou hast fallen more heavily
Than Cato the third of old,
When in his vainglory
He falls through a just judgment.
Bought by the craft of Simon,
The soldier he of Winchester
Presides over the treasury ;
Learned he in accounts,
But ignorant he of the Gospel !
As he turns over the royal rolls,*



'Men whispered to each other that the King was excommunicated.'—WARRIOR, PRIEST, AND STATESMAN, page 215.

Lucre prevails over Luke
A mark he prefers to Mark,
And the Book (*liber*) values less than a pound (*librum*).

From this, and similar effusions, it is evident that the cause of the Church, in the days of John, as in the days of Henry II., was the cause of the common people; and not unfittingly, since the Church was as yet the sole defence of the commons against the oppression of the crown.

With the plunder thus unscrupulously extorted, John carried on his campaigns against Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. He professed himself wholly indifferent to the terrors of Papal wrath, and Innocent accordingly drew another arrow from his well-stored quiver, which should strike the King individually. He resolved to excommunicate him. At the intercession of Stephen Langton—who, in imitation of his great predecessor, Becket, had taken up his residence at Pontigny—he had so far relaxed the severity of the interdict, as to permit the performance of divine service once a week in the conventual churches. He now issued his commission to the fugitive Bishops of London, Ely, and Winchester, to pronounce the sentence of excommunication, which, every Sunday and fast-day, was to be repeated in all the conventual churches of the kingdom. The terror inspired by John's mad outbursts of anger was so great, that no prelate dared carry out the Papal commands; the whole clergy remained silent. But, in some mysterious manner, the awful fact transpired; men whispered to each other that the King was excommunicated; it was known in the market-places; it spread from town to town and village to village. And then to one ecclesiastic happened what the others had justly feared. Geoffrey, Archdeacon of Norwich, who was employed in the royal exchequer, shrank from serving an excommunicated King. He withdrew to Norwich. John despatched his messengers after the fugitive; he was seized,

loaded with chains, "cased in a surcoat of lead," and he died in prison.

It is remarkable, says Dean Milman,¹ that while the interdict of one year reduced the more haughty and able Philip Augustus to submission, the weak, tyrannical, and contemptible John defied for four years its awful effects, and even for some time those of personal excommunication. Had John, continues the historian, been a popular sovereign; had he won to his own side by wise conciliation, by respect to their rights, by a dignified appeal to their patriotism, the barons and the people of England; had he even tempted their worse passions, and offered them a share in the confiscated property of the Church, probably the greatest of the Popes might have wasted his ineffectual thunders on the land. Above two years after the interdict, and when the sentence of excommunication was well known, King John held his Christmas at Windsor; not one of the great barons refused to communicate with him [A.D. 1210]. But while he defied the Pope and the hierarchy, he laboured at the same time to incur the hatred of all classes of his subjects. His general course of conduct is pithily described by Peter Langtoft:—

"He was a fole of life, and vsed lichorie."²

Nothing was safe from his rapacity or his lust. He dishonoured his most powerful nobles by his shameless profligacy; he oppressed the lower orders with cruel and arbitrary forest laws. The Jews he overwhelmed with the most horrible barbarities, and the whole people with heavy and unprecedented taxation. At length, when he had thus estranged from himself the affections of his people, Innocent launched against him the last thunderbolt of the Holy See. He had smitten the land

¹ Milman's "History of Latin Christianity," v. 277, 278.

² "Peter Langtoft's Chronicle," ed. Hearne [1725], i. 210.

with an interdict, and the King's person with an excommunication ; he now proceeded, by an unparalleled assumption of supreme authority, to depose him from the throne he disgraced. The sentence of deposition was solemnly proclaimed, and his dominions were declared "the lawful spoil of whoever could wrest them from his unhallowed hands."

This final exercise of Papal power signalised the year of grace 1213. But in the three preceding years, John, in his occasional fits of alarm, had made several attempts to effect a reconciliation with the Holy See. As early as 1209 he had invited Stephen Langton to repair to England, and forward him a safe conduct. But when the safe conduct was examined, it was found to be addressed to Langton the Cardinal of the Roman Church, and not to Langton, the Primate of the Church of England ; the Archbishop, therefore, refused to avail himself of it.

A few months later, and another prospect of reconciliation was opened up. Stephen Langton then repaired to Dover, and expressed his willingness to meet the King. The latter, however, would not consent to a personal interview ; but taking up his residence at Chilham Castle, near Canterbury, he sent proposals of accommodation by his Justiciary, Geoffrey Fitz-Peter, and the Bishop of Winchester. But as he declined to grant the entire restoration of the property he had sequestered from the Church, the negotiation again fell through.

In the following year, arrangements seem to have been made for an interview between the King and the Archbishop at Dover, and the former repaired thither ; but Stephen, finding that none of the nobles who had promised him protection would be present, wisely refused to place himself in the power of the treacherous John. That he was justified in his refusal we can well believe ; for John, in addressing the Papal envoys at Northampton [August 1211], did not hesitate to say,—“ You

may demand of me what you will, and I will grant it ; but never will I give that Stephen a safe conduct of force sufficient to prevent me from hanging him by the neck the moment he touches land of mine."

In 1213, as we have seen, the struggle between the King and the Pope reached its climax. Philip Augustus of France had driven John out of Normandy ; he now resolved to avail himself of the Papal sentence of deposition to drive him out of his English dominions. At one time he himself had been no warm adherent of the Roman Church ; but he now made haste to proclaim himself its loyal servant, and undertake this novel crusade. At a great council held in Soissons, Stephen Langton and the Bishops of Ely and London were received by the King of France, his bishops, clergy, and nobles [April 5, 1213]. The English prelates read the Papal sentence of deposition, and enjoined upon the King of France and all others, under the promise of the remission of their sins, to take up arms against the impious King of England, and place on its throne a worthier sovereign.¹ Thus encouraged, Philip Augustus proceeded to levy a large military force, and to open negotiations with the discontented English nobles. He also assembled an armament of seventeen hundred ships in the Channel.

Nor was John inactive. The crisis aroused those higher faculties of his mind which were ordinarily kept down by his self-indulgence and tyrannical temper. He issued orders that every ship in his dominions capable of the freight of six horses should repair to Portsmouth, to join in an expedition against the coast of Normandy. On Barham Downs, near Dover, he concentrated an army of sixty thousand men. He was nobly seconded in his efforts to protect his kingdom from invasion by all classes of his subjects, whose indignation was absorbed

¹ Milman's "Latin Christianity," v. 279.

in their patriotism, and whose love of their country prevailed over their detestation of their King. They were content to see him punished by the censures of the Pope, but they would not permit the throne of England to be seized by a French monarch. It is said that, in his desperation, he sent offers to the Caliph, Mohammed el Nasser, that he would embrace the faith of Islam, and own himself the Caliph's vassal, if he would support him in his struggle against France and the Pope. The story is gravely told by Matthew Paris,¹ but, on the very face of it, is impossible. John was too sagacious not to have known that, by declaring himself a Mohammedan, he would have arrayed against him not only all Christendom, but his own subjects.

Meantime his fleet captured some vessels off the mouth of the Seine, and burned Fecamp and Dieppe. Philip Augustus was constrained to lead his soldiers into Normandy for the defence of the coast, and the invasion was postponed. It was at this moment of success that John suddenly humiliated himself before the Pope, and granted all, and more than had been previously demanded of him. Our historians are much puzzled to account for so singular a change of conduct; but there can be little doubt that John had discovered the ramifications of an extensive conspiracy against his person; and had ascertained that, though all England was prepared to resist invasion, all England was not prepared to acquiesce in the tyranny of a licentious despot. He was also actuated, in all probability, by one of those sudden impulses common to men of his capricious character, who are apt to plunge at once from the heights of self-assertion into the depths of self-degradation, who alternate, without apparent cause, between a noisy courage and a shameful timidity. He found himself in a position of the most critical nature. His courage gave way, and he

¹ Matthew Paris, p. 169.

resolved at all costs to extricate himself from it. A man of honourable temper and political insight would, under such circumstances, have summoned Stephen Langton to his councils, have effected (as it was easy for him to do) a reconciliation with the Primate he had insulted, and then appealed to the patriotic spirit of his subjects to support him in any struggle with Rome or France that his defence of England's rights might have rendered necessary. But such a procedure was inconsistent with John's crooked character and vacillating disposition. He was afraid of the Pope, and he determined to buy his favour, though the price at which it was to be bought was nothing less than the honour of his crown and the liberties of his kingdom.¹

¹ The hope of John, says Dean Milman, lay in detaching the Pope himself, by feigned or by temporary submission, from the head of his own league, in making a separate peace with the Pontiff.—*Latin Christianity*, v. 281. But from what we know of Stephen Langton, and of the leading English nobles, we may reasonably conjecture that, if he had dealt with them honestly, they would have been the first to oppose the pretensions of Rome to make and unmake kings. John's great danger lay in his insincerity. Men could not believe him; and it was because they could not trust him that the barons of England submitted for a time to Papal arrogance.





CHAPTER II.

MAGNA CHARTA, THE GREAT CHARTER.

Lo ! John self-stripped of his insignia :—crown,
Sceptre and mantle, sword and ring, laid down
At a proud legate's feet ! The spears that line
Baronial halls the opprobrious insult feels.

—WORDSWORTH.

IN the grand historical drama of “King John,” our national poet represents the Bastard Philip Faulconbridge as dragging into the royal presence one Peter of Pomfret. Says the bold Bastard—

“ As I travelled hither through the land,
I find the people strangely fantasied ;
Possess'd with rumours, filled with idle dreams ;
Not knowing what they fear, but full of fear :
And here's a prophet, that I brought with me
From forth the streets of Pomfret, whom I found
With many hundreds treading on his heels ;
To whom he sang, in rude, harsh-sounding rhymes,
That, ere the next Ascension Day at noon,
Your highness should deliver up your crown.”

The King interrogates the would-be prophet—

“ Thou idle dreamer, wherefore didst thou so ? ”

Peter replies—

“ Foreknowing that the truth will fall out so.”

The King rejoins—

“ Hubert, away with him ; imprison him ;
And on that day at noon whereon he says
I shall yield up my crown, let him be hang’d.” ¹

This is no poetic fiction. Peter of Pomfret, a hermit, had obtained among the people a great repute by his various predictions ; and of all of these, the one most readily accredited and widely spread was his saying, that before Ascension Day John would cease to be King of England. Such prophecies have a tendency to fulfil themselves. At all events, it seems to have exercised a great influence on the mind of the King, who, like most irreligious men, was grossly superstitious, and to have had its share in bringing him to the Pope’s feet. Sending for the sub-deacon Pandulf, a subtle and keen-witted Italian, much trusted by Innocent, who had sent him to England as Legate, he declared himself willing to concede everything the Pope had demanded.

The state of the case, as Dean Hook dispassionately puts it, was this : The King stood in need of immediate protection from his enemies at home and abroad ; the barons desired to erect some power in the state to which an appeal might be made against the despotic acts of the King, without incessant recourse to arms ; the clergy sought to secure themselves in the enjoyment of the temporalities of the Church. Thus, then, all required protection, and all agreed that it was desirable to seek it from the Pope of Rome rather than from the King of France, from a distant and friendly potentate rather than from an ambitious and hostile neighbour. But, adds Dean Hook,

¹ Shakespeare’s “King John,” act iv. scene 2.

it is a maxim in law that protection and subjection are reciprocal. If the Pope of Rome was to afford protection, he must be acknowledged paramount.

To the majority of the Englishmen of that day there was nothing dishonourable or shameful in such an acknowledgment. The feudal system had accustomed them to the relations between a vassal and his liege lord. We shall see that to the treaty between John and the Pope, two of the Magna Charta barons, the Earls of Pembroke and Salisbury, affixed their signatures; and hence we may infer that they did not regard the King's humiliation with any very warm disapproval. We are inclined to think that the full significance and possible consequences of his act were not at the time apprehended, or that it was supposed to be done for a purely temporary purpose.

This, at all events, we must remember—that in the early reigns of the Plantagenets the crown was much more dreaded than the Church, which was popularly supposed to be the champion and defender of the people's liberties; and such we conceive to have been the view of the Church's duties held both by Thomas à Becket and Stephen Langton.

The popular estimate of the quarrel in which John had involved himself, and of its mode of settlement, seems to be very fairly given by Peter Langtoft. The passage is worth quoting :—

“ Oft was the pleynt made unto the Pape;
 The manfesours¹ ateynt,² and cursed ouer the nape.
 The Pape of ther enoure had fulle grete pite;
 He sent to ther socoure two legates over the se.
 At Douere thei gan ariue, Pandolf and Durand,
 To London gan thei driue; the barons ther thei fand.
 Through Pandolf's prechyng ther werre was brought till ende;
 The barons and the Kyng were mad felawtes and frendes,

¹ Ill-doers.

² Were attainted.

Asoiled ¹ and alle on euen ; bot the Kyng an oth suore,
He suld him venge on Steuen, whider so euer he fore,²
And of the fourtene monkes, where man not tham finde,
Be beten alle fonkes,³ or in prison thaim binde.
Pandolf and Durand did com forth the Ersbishop,
And the monkes forth thei fand,⁴ Jon said, thei suld heddes hop.
Pandolf proued the Kyng, in his disputeson,
He mayntend wrongfule thing, and wild to no reson.
He proued thorth wisdom in ilk manere cas,
That the Kyng misnam,⁵ and did grete trespas.
Alle gate ⁶ the Kyng he pesed,⁷ so that the,werre was ent,
And ilk a clerke sesed ⁸ ageyn to haf his rent."⁹

John took up his residence in a preceptory of the Knights Templars at Ewell, near Dover, two of whom introduced Pandulf to his presence on the 9th of May. The settlement of the terms of peace occupied the various negotiating parties until the 13th, when, attended by his earls and barons, he repaired to Dover.¹⁰ The concessions he had made were then recorded in a charter, which was sealed and subscribed on the 15th. It acknowledged the full right of Langton to the See of Canterbury ; it repealed the decree of banishment against the clergy, and restored them to their offices and estates ; it provided for full restitution of all moneys confiscated to the royal use, and due compensation for other wrongs ; it promised the payment of a specific sum to the Primate, and to each of the exiled bishops ; it released from imprisonment all who had been apprehended during the prolonged contest ; it reversed the sentences of outlawry ; and it guaranteed the clergy for the future from the arbitrary exercise of the power of the crown. The stipulations were attested and subscribed on the

¹ Absolved.

² Whithersoever he went.

³ Be beaten all to funks, *i.e.*, or "till they stink again."

⁴ Found.

⁵ Mistook.

⁶ Altogether.

⁷ Appeased.

⁸ Possessed.

⁹ Peter Langtoft, ed. Hearne, i. 211

¹⁰ Roger of Wendover, pp. 248, 249.

part of the King by four barons ; the legate, on the part of the Pope, undertook that, upon their proper fulfilment, the interdict and excommunication should be removed, and the bishops should take a new oath of allegiance.

It was difficult for John to surrender more than this, and yet he had not drank the cup of humiliation to the dregs. It wanted two days to Ascension Day, and he was to work out unconsciously the "prediction" of Peter the Hermit.

On the vigil of that great feast, the legate, in full pomp, appeared in the church of the Templars, attended by priests and choristers, and bearing the insignia of his office. On the other side entered King John, accompanied by his barons and councillors, and, after some preliminaries, he placed in Pandulf's hands an instrument signed, sealed, and subscribed with his own name, and with those of the attesting witnesses.

The charter was as follows:¹—

"Be it known to all men, that having in many things offended God and our Holy Mother the Church, as satisfaction for our sins, and in order to humble ourselves duly after the example of Him who humbled Himself to death for our sake, we, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, with our own free will and the common consent of our barons, bestow upon, and yield up to God, to His holy apostles Peter and Paul, to our lord the Pope Innocent, and his successors, all our kingdom of England, and all our kingdom of Ireland, to be held as a fief of the Holy See, with the payment of one thousand marks, and the customary Peter's Pence. We reserve to ourselves, and to our heirs, the royal rights in the administration of justice. And we declare this deed irrevocable ; and if any of our successors shall attempt to annul it,² we declare him thereby to have forfeited his crown."

The attesting witnesses were the Archbishop of Dublin, John

¹ T. Duffus Hardy's "Itinerary of King John" (anno 1213).

² The act of submission was annulled, however, by Edward III. in 1366, and with the full consent of the Parliament of England. The three estates, peers, prelates, and commons, pledged themselves to defend, if necessary, the cause of the King against the Pope.

de Gray, Bishop of Norwich, the Earls of Pembroke and Salisbury, and some others, and four barons.

The next day, John, swearing on the Holy Gospels, took the usual oath of fealty, and did homage to the Pope in the following form :—

“ I, John, by the grace of God, King of England and Lord of Ireland, from this time forth and for ever, will be faithful to God and the ever-blessed Peter, and to the Church of Rome, and to my liege lord, the Pope Innocent, and his Catholic successors. I will not be accessory in art or word, by consent or counsel, to aught by which they may suffer loss of life, or limb, or freedom ; I will keep them harmless from any wrong-doing of which I may know ; I will avert all in my power ; I will warn them by myself, or by trusty messengers, of any evil intended against them. I will keep profoundly secret all communications with which they may entrust me by letter or message. I will aid in the maintenance and defence of the patrimony of St Peter, and particularly will I hold this kingdom of England and Ireland, to the utmost of my power, against all enemies. So help me God and His Holy Gospel. Amen.”

The sonnet in which Wordsworth refers to this remarkable scene is probably familiar to our readers ; yet we quote it in order to reiterate our assertion that there is no ground for supposing it to have been regarded by John's contemporaries in the light in which the poet regards it. We must beware against considering the men and deeds of the past from the view-point of the present, and applying our nineteenth century standards to the thirteenth. What John's contemporaries undoubtedly did condemn was his abrupt transition from ostentatious insolence to servile humility, his dangerous caprices, his vacillating temperament, his cruelty, and his lust. It was their fear and hatred of these very qualities that led them to welcome the interposition of some authority supreme to, and yet distinct from, that of the King. This implied no un-English recognition of the Pope as a temporal power. There is every reason to believe that Stephen Langton approved of John's renuncia-

tion, and yet his whole after-career abundantly shows that he was no slave of Rome, but a firm and uncompromising defender of English liberties.

WORDSWORTH'S SONNET ON PAPAL ABUSES.

“As with the stream our voyage we pursue,
The gross materials of this world present
A marvellous study of wild accident ;
Uncouth proximities of old and new,
And bold transfigurations, more untrue
(As might be deemed) to disciplined intent
Than aught the sky's fantastic element,
When most fantastic, offers to the view.
Saw we not Henry scourged at Becket's shrine ?
Lo ! John self-stripped of his insignia :—crown,
Sceptre and mantle, sword and ring, laid down
At a proud legate's feet. The spears that lined
Baronial halls the opprobrious insult feel ;
And angry ocean roars a vain appeal.”¹

The last lines embody a poetical exaggeration, and the reader is by this time aware that no “opprobrious” insults were perceived by the barons of England.

Peace being thus concluded, Langton prepared to assume his archiepiscopal duties ; yet such was the distrust inspired by John's character that he refused to quit his Continental asylum until his safe conduct was countersigned by the nobles who had embraced his side. The required guarantee reached him in July, and was accompanied by a letter from the King, earnestly beseeching him and the exiled bishops to return. To this request Pandulf, who was henceforth a partisan of John's, did not forget to add his own solicitations.

The King and the prelate met for the first time at Winchester, on the 20th of July, the Feast of St Margaret. John had arrived at the city on the preceding day, and as the splen-

¹ Wordsworth's “Ecclesiastical Sonnets,” xxxvii.

did cavalcade of the Archbishop was seen approaching over the green Hampshire Downs, he went forth to meet him at Magdalene Hill, flung himself at his feet, and, in a broken voice, entreated the Primate to have pity upon him. At so much abasement, Langton and his bishops were moved to tears.¹ They raised him from the ground, and the royal train mingling with the archiepiscopal retinue, the united procession poured into the ancient city, chanting the 51st Psalm. The King had the place of honour given him between the Primate and the Bishop of London. Thus they approached the western door of Walkelin's Cathedral, where the principal barons and clergy of the kingdom were assembled, and a great number of the common people, weeping and praying. Without entering the sanctuary, they turned to the south, and still in solemn procession arrived at the chapter-house, where, on a copy of the Holy Gospels, the King swore,² "that he would love Holy Mother Church, and her lawful ministers; that, to the utmost of his power, he would defend and maintain them against all their enemies; that he would renew all the good laws of his ancestors, especially those of King Edward; that he would annul all evil ones, would judge his people according to the just decrees of his courts, and restore to every man his lawful rights." He also swore, "that before the next Easter-tide, he would make restitution of confiscated property to all who were concerned in the matter of the interdict; and that if he neglected to do this, he would consent to a renewal of his former sentence of excommunication. Finally, he repeated his oath of fealty to Pope Innocent and his Catholic successors."

¹ Our ancestors seem to have been less chary than we are of giving visible expression to their emotions. Grave prelates and bearded warriors did not disdain to weep on any and all occasions, though it is the pride of their descendants to show themselves unused to the "melting mood."

² Roger of Wendover, anno 1213, pp. 259, 260.

These oaths completed, which, as the reader will see, concerned the subjects of John in their civil rights much more than they concerned the Primate and his fellow-priests, the King knelt, and the Archbishop pronounced his absolution: "May the Lord Jesus absolve thee! By the authority of God and the Church, I absolve thee from thy sins, whether confessed or forgotten, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

The procession now quitted the chapter-house, and, amidst the shouts of the excited multitude, entered the long-drawn aisles of the Cathedral. Ascending the steps of the chancel, Langton took his place before the high altar, and, for the first time for nearly six years, the Holy Eucharist was celebrated. As the Papal interdict had not yet been removed, this was an act of bold independence on the Archbishop's part, very significant of his future relations with the Church of Rome.

This happy reconciliation between the Church and the State was celebrated by three days' rejoicings at Winchester, during which the Archbishop dined at the royal table. John, on his part, sent letters to all the sheriffs of the kingdom, ordering them to send four liege men from each town in their respective counties, to meet at St Albans on the 4th of August, and assess the amount to be paid to the bishops in compensation for the losses they had sustained.

In this proceeding, however, we may well suspect the sincerity of the King. The motives which actuated him are obvious. He felt himself unable to trust—he knew, indeed, he had every reason to fear—the barons. He therefore assumed the Cross, and pledged himself to join the Crusades; because, by so doing, he rendered his person sacred. His next great object was so to secure his power that he might, without risk of losing his throne, pour out his vengeance upon those whom his treachery and cruelty had brought to the verge of rebellion.

For this purpose he had bought the favour and protection of the Church of Rome by swearing fealty to the Pope. The Primate of the English Church being at the same time a Cardinal of the Roman Church, he probably supposed that the two Churches were in reality one. This, however, as Dean Hook remarks, and as can never be too often repeated, was not the case. When the Church of Rome, under the skilful rule of Innocent, had attained its climax of power and influence, the English Church still remained independent of it. Its interests and its policy were not those of the Papacy. And thus while the Church of Rome supported John in his conflict with the barons, the Church of England supported the barons against the King. Langton became the leader, the heart and brain of that popular party which the Pope, by siding with John, endeavoured to crush.

Pandulf, on leaving England, had repaired to the French Court, and, in the name of the Pope, prohibited Philip Augustus from continuing hostilities against John, since he had become reconciled to the Church. The disappointed ambition of the French monarch found vent in the most violent expressions: "What!" he cried, "had he assembled for nought, at a cost of sixty thousand pounds, and in obedience to the entreaty of the Pope, one of the most splendid armaments which had ever met under a King of France? And was all the chivalry of France to be dismissed like hired menials when there was no further use for their services?" But the Papal injunction might not be disregarded, and Philip was only too glad to wreak his rage on Ferraud, Count of Flanders, whom John had persuaded to abandon the league against him. He marched to subdue the Flemings, swearing Flanders should be France, or France Flanders; but the Flemings were assisted by the English fleet, and drove back their boastful enemy in signal disgrace.

Rejoicing in the defeat of his implacable foe, John resolved

on following up such unexpected success by an invasion of Poitou, never doubting that his barons and men-at-arms would willingly follow him, now that he had reconciled himself so ostentatiously with the Church. But he was still regarded with distrust, suspicion, and hatred. His summons was answered by only a few of the barons, and even these abandoned him on reaching Jersey. This, observes Milman,¹ was the first overt act in the momentous strife of the barons of England for English liberties which resulted in the signature of the Great Charter; and at the head of these barons was Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury. Henry II., continues the historian, had not more completely mistaken the character of the man when he raised Becket to the Primacy as a means of establishing the royal supremacy over the Church, than Innocent, when he elevated Langton to the same dignity, to maintain the exorbitant pretensions of Rome over England. Langton, broader in his sympathies, and more enlightened in his views, than Becket, remembered not only that he was an archbishop, but an Englishman and a noble of England. In conjunction with the Pope, he had asserted the liberties of the Church against the King; now, in conjunction with the barons, he prepared to assert the liberties of England against both King and Pope.

It is surprising with what promptitude Langton took the lead of the barons' party, and how complete was the trust the barons at once reposed in their new chief. We cannot but conclude that from his retirement at Pontigny he had closely watched the progress of events, and made ready for decided action when the opportunity came. He must certainly have given the barons good reason to place their confidence in him, or they would scarcely have acknowledged his leadership with so little hesitation. When John returned from Jersey to avenge on his contumacious barons their desertion of his standard, Langton im-

¹ Milman's "Latin Christianity," v. 289.

mediately repaired to Northampton, and boldly censured his arming against them before they had been tried and found guilty in the royal courts, as a violation of the solemn oath he had sworn before his absolution. John dismissed him with anger and contempt, bidding him refrain from meddling with state affairs. But Langton followed him to Nottingham, and threatened to excommunicate every one but the King who should engage in the war before the barons had been fairly tried. John reluctantly gave way, and promised to convoke a council of his nobles.

In the Michaelmas of 1213, Nicholas, Bishop of Tusculum, arrived in England, commissioned to determine the amount of compensation to be paid to the clergy, and when that was paid, to remove the interdict from the kingdom. He was received by John with cordiality, and by the barons with respect. His first act was to degrade the Abbot of Westminster, who had been proved guilty of incontinence; his next, to inflict a severe penance on the citizens of Oxford for the murder of two clerks. He then required the King to renew his oath of fealty, and to pay down an instalment (one thousand marks) of his annual tribute to the Roman See. And accordingly, on the 2d of October, and at St Paul's Church, London, John executed the charter of surrender, handed over the money, and, resigning his crown into the legate's hands, received it back as a donation from the Pope.¹

The question of compensation was not so easily settled. In the first place, it was difficult to assess the exact amount of damage suffered by the clergy, whose houses had been pulled down, their granaries burned, their woods felled, and their orchards destroyed. In the second, John was at a loss for the means of payment, as he could scarcely compel the sequestrators to return what he himself had voluntarily bestowed upon them.

¹ See a full account of this transaction in Matthew Paris.

At length he offered a gross sum of 100,000 marks, which the legate, much to the dissatisfaction of the clergy, declared to be sufficient. The bishops received in advance a sum of 1500 marks, and eventually the matter was referred to the Pope, who awarded to the Archbishop and the Bishops of London and Ely the sum of 40,000 marks,—not without warm eulogiums on John for his moderation, humility, and piety, and bitter sarcasms on the avarice and grasping extortion of Langton and his suffragans. A few months before, and Innocent had launched his thunderbolts at the monarch whom he now panegyrised, and forced upon him the Primate he now condemned. So marvellous was the change wrought by John's well-timed act of subserviency and abasement!

The conduct of the legate Nicholas was a grievous annoyance to the clergy and people of England. Everywhere he put aside the authority of the Anglican bishops, degrading abbots and sequestering clergy as he pleased, and filling up the vacant benefices with the King's creatures, utterly regardless of their want of proper qualifications. He travelled through the country with a cavalcade of fifty horses, and compelled the Church to defray his enormous expenses out of its wasted revenues. Langton viewed his conduct with anger and disgust, and summoned a council of his bishops at Dunstable (January 1214) to discuss the position of affairs. By their advice he despatched certain priests to inhibit the legate from inducting prelates and priests within the realm. Both parties appealed to the Pope. The legate was represented by the wily Pandulf; Stephen, by his bold brother Simon, who afterwards held the Archbishopric of York in open defiance of the Papal prohibition. But all Simon Langton's arguments availed nothing against the King's charter of surrender, with its golden seal.

In February 1214 John accomplished his long-meditated descent upon Poitou. And in June, being then at Angers, he

arranged a settlement of the disputed question of compensation by agreeing to pay an annual sum of 12,000 marks to the Pope until all claims should be liquidated. The interdict was then removed—it had already been greatly relaxed by Langton on his own authority—after having vexed the land for a period of six years, three months, and fourteen days. The legate then quitted England, followed by the execrations of the people, whose feelings he had wounded, and whose rights he had disowned.

Some great successes won by Philip Augustus in Flanders compelled John to abandon his invasion of Poitou, and he returned to England in sullen discontent, to find himself confronted by a confederacy of his most powerful barons, resolute on a limitation of the royal prerogatives. Of this confederacy Langton was the soul and chief, though he prudently stood aloof from the active contest, and never dishonoured the priest's robes by assuming the warrior's armour. The movement (as we should now call it) he had inaugurated at the Council of St Albans, held on the 4th of August 1213, where, to the assembled bishops, abbots, priors, and barons, he produced the celebrated charter of Henry I., and caused it to be read aloud.

This charter is of so much importance that we shall repeat it here, though admitting our readers will not find it particularly "amusing":—

CHARTER OF HENRY I.¹

Henry, by the grace of God King of England, to Hugh de Borlande, Justiciary of England, and all his faithful subjects, as well French as English, in Hertfordshire: greeting.

Know that I, by the Lord's mercy, have been crowned king by common consent of the barons of the kingdom of England; and because the kingdom has been oppressed by unjust exactions, I, out of reverence to God, and

¹ Submitted by Langton to the Council of St Albans, at St Paul's Church, London, August 25, 1213.

the love I feel towards you, in the first place constitute the Holy Church of God a free Church, so that I will not sell it, nor farm it out ; nor will I, on the death of any archbishop, bishop, or abbot, take anything from the domain of the Church or its people until his successor is appointed.

And I, from this time, do away with all the evil practices by which the kingdom of England is now unjustly oppressed, and which evil practices I here to some extent enumerate.

If any baron, earl, or other subject of mine, who holds possession from me, shall die, his heir shall not redeem his land, as was the custom in my father's time, but shall pay a just and lawful relief for the same ; and, in like manner, too, the dependents of my barons shall pay a like relief for their land to their lords. And if any baron, or other subject of mine, shall wish to give his daughter, his sister, his niece, or other female relative, in marriage, let him ask my permission in the matter ; but for granting my permission, I will not take any of his property, nor will I forbid his giving her in marriage, except he wishes to give her to an enemy of mine ; and if on the death of a baron, or other subject of mine, the daughter is left heiress, I, by the advice of my barons, will give her in marriage, together with the land ; and if, on the death of a husband, the wife survives and is childless, she shall have her dowry and a marriage, as long as she shall keep herself according to law, and I will not give her to a husband, unless with her consent ; and the guardian of the children's land shall be either the wife or some other near relation who ought more rightly to be so ; and I enjoin on my barons to act in the same way towards the sons and daughters and wives of their dependents.

Moreover, the common monetage, as taken throughout the cities and counties, such as was not in use in King Edward's time, is hereby forbidden ; and if any one, whether a carrier or any other person, be taken with false money, let strict justice be done to him for it.

All pleas and all debts which were due to the King my brother I forgive, except my farms and those debts which were contracted for the inheritances of others, or for those things which more justly belong to others. And if any one shall have covenanted anything for his inheritance, I forgive it, and all reliefs which were contracted for just inheritances.

And if any baron, or subject of mine, shall be ill, I hereby ratify all such disposition as he shall have made of his money ; but if, through service in war or sickness, he shall have made no disposition of his money, his wife, or children, or parents and legitimate dependents, shall distribute it for the good of his soul as it shall seem best to them.

If any baron or other subject of mine shall have made forfeiture, he shall not give surety to the amount of all his money, as was done in the time of my father and my brother, but according to the degree of the forfeiture; nor shall he make amends for his fault, as he did in the time of my father, or of my other ancestors; and if any one shall be convicted of treason or other crime, his punishment shall be according to his fault.

I forgive all murders committed previous to the day on which I was crowned king; but those which have been committed since shall be justly punished, according to the law of King Edward.

By the common advice of my barons, I have retained the forests in my possession, as my father held them.

All knights, moreover, who hold their lands by service are hereby allowed to have all their domains free from all amercements and from all peculiar service, that, as they are thus relieved from a great burden, they may provide themselves properly with horses and arms, so that they may be fit and ready for my service and for the defence of my kingdom.

I bestow confirmed peace in all my kingdom, and I order it to be preserved from henceforth.

I restore to you the law of King Edward, with the amendments which my father, by the advice of his barons, made in it. If any one has taken anything of mine, or of any one else's property, since the death of my brother, King William, let it all be soon restored without alteration; and if any one shall retain anything of it, he shall, on being discovered, atone to me for it heavily.

Witness—MAURICE, Bishop of London; WILLIAM, Bishop Elect of Winchester; GERARD, Bishop of Hereford; EARL HENRY, EARL SIMON, EARL WALTER GIFFORD, ROBERT DE MONTFORT, ROGER BIGOD, and many others.¹

An examination of this charter will show the reader the nature of the wrongs from which the people of England, or rather its barons, knights, and wealthy yeomen, had suffered under William I. and William II.; and will also bring into vivid relief the

¹ This charter is given by Roger of Wendover *in extenso* (*sub anno* 1214). We have adopted Dean Hook's translation, from his "Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury," ii. 713, 714.

oppressive character of the feudal system, The privileges which Henry grants are but the commonest rights of every free man—to dispose of his property as he will; to marry his daughter to a suitable husband, without payment of a fine; and to succeed to his father's estates, exempt from the exactions of avaricious kings.

By this plain enunciation of their rights and privileges, priests and warriors were stirred up to a novel enthusiasm. They declared themselves ready to contend, and, if need were, to die for the liberties their ancestors had enjoyed. "Swear it!" exclaimed the Primate. They swore it; and the first great league for the defence of English freedom was solemnly formed. The descendants of the Norman knights who had followed the banner of William were now English barons; and that wonderful aristocracy had sprung into existence, which, from that day to this, with few exceptions, has ever shown itself solicitous for the preservation and extension of the liberties of England, and has had its reward in a longer lease of power than the aristocracy of any other nation has ever enjoyed.

John returned to England in October, a sullen, a discontented, and an unhappy man, stained with the blood of his nephew Arthur, hated and scorned by his subjects, dishonoured by his feudal superior, the King of France.¹ He began to collect an army of mercenaries, and of his more immediate vassals, to punish the rebellious barons. They on their part determined to oppose force by force. Attended by their retainers, and fully armed, they met at St Edmundsbury, and before the shrine of the martyr-king, each baron took a solemn oath to withdraw his allegiance from John and wage war

¹ John having been declared guilty, by his peers, of the murder of Prince Arthur, was deprived by the King of France, as his suzerain, of the Duchy of Normandy.

against him until he confirmed to them by charter their just and lawful rights.

John meanwhile continued his military preparations, asserting that "he hated, like serpents' venom, the nobles of his kingdom, especially Sayer de Quiney, Robert Fitzwalter, and the Archbishop, Stephen Langton." He endeavoured by various concessions to detach the Church from the barons' cause, and renewed his solicitations at Rome for Papal support. The Church of England remained faithful to its traditions; the Pope readily promised his assistance to his vassal. "We must maintain the rights of, and repel all insurrection against, a King who is our vassal." And he severely rebuked Langton, whom he accused of being the secret instigator of the revolt, commanding him to effect a reconciliation between John and his subjects. The barons he also rebuked, censuring them for employing force to extort any concessions from their sovereign, and of his sole authority annulling all their leagues and covenants.

But the censures of the Pope were utterly disregarded.

Early in April the splendid array of the barons—two thousand knights in complete armour, with cavalry, bowmen, and attendants—assembled at Stamford. On Monday the 6th they encamped at Brackley. The King, alarmed and discomfited by so preponderant a display of force, moved forward to Oxford, to open negotiations with them. These were entrusted to Langton and the Earl of Pembroke, who were instructed to ask for a categorical explanation of the rights and privileges they expected the King to concede.

In reply, the barons handed to the royal envoys a schedule, probably drawn up by Langton himself, in which the laws and customs of the nation were recited; and they added that, unless these were granted, they would appeal to the arbitrament of the sword. Langton and Pembroke returned to Oxford, and

endeavoured to wring the King's consent; expounding line after line, and clause after clause, of the document, until John, in a burst of passion, exclaimed: "Why do they not ask from me my crown at once? By the truth of God, I will grant no liberties to these men whose object it is to make me a slave!"

As soon as the King's passionate refusal was made known to the barons, they appointed Robert Fitz-Walter their marischal, and through a county which eagerly welcomed their approach, they moved upon the metropolis. London threw open its gates on Sunday the 24th of May, and "the army of God and the Church" made it their head-quarters, receiving daily accessions to their ranks, until scarcely a noble of any influence adhered to the royal cause. To so low a condition was John reduced, that his retinue consisted only of seven knights. The mercenaries whose services he had hired on the Continent had not arrived. There was no alternative between submission and deposition. He therefore commissioned the Earl of Pembroke to inform the barons that he was willing to concede their demands, and requested them to name the day and the place where he and they might meet together.

Accordingly, on the 15th of June 1215, the two parties met on the field of Runnymede, by the bank of the Thames, between Staines and Windsor. John was attended by Stephen Langton, seven bishops, and about fourteen earls and barons; but though their duties kept them about his person, he was well aware that most of them sympathised with the cause of the barons, and that his only friends were the sub-deacon Pandulf and Almein, Master of the Temple.

From the meadow they passed over, if tradition may be credited, to a small ait or islet in the river, still known as Magna Charta Island, and there he reluctantly affixed his signature to the great title-deed of English liberty. O Englishmen! revere a name so sacred!—

“ This is the place
Where England's ancient barons, clad in arms,
And stern with conquest, from their tyrant King
(There rendered tame) did challenge and secure
The Charter of thy Freedom. Pass not on
Till thou hast blessed their memory, and paid
Those thanks which God appointed, the reward
Of public virtue.”

In reference to an event of so much importance in English history, which forms indeed the landmark from which our constitutional historians take their departure, we shall avail ourselves of the judicious and moderate remarks of Mr Hallam. No writer was less likely to be influenced in his judgment by an undue enthusiasm, and consequently all the greater weight attaches to the panegyric which he pronounces on the Great Charter.

As this, he says,¹ was the first effort towards a legal government, so is it beyond comparison the most important event in our history, except that Revolution [of 1688], without which its benefits would have been rapidly annihilated. The constitution of England has indeed no single date from which its duration is to be reckoned. The institutions of positive law, the far more important changes which time has wrought in the order of society during six hundred years subject to the Great Charter, have undoubtedly lessened its direct application to our present circumstances. But it is still the keystone of English liberty. All that has since been obtained is little more than as confirmation or commentary ; and were every subsequent law to be swept away, the bold features would still remain that distinguish a free from a despotic monarchy.

Of late, as Mr Hallam remarks, it has been the fashion to depreciate the Great Charter, as if it gratified only the selfish ambition of a few powerful barons, and redressed none of the

¹ Hallam's "Middle Ages," ii. 326, 327.

grievances of the common people. Nothing can be more unjust. It might, indeed, be urged that we have no right to investigate the motives of individuals, and that those motives, however mean and base, cannot impair the happy consequences of a great reform ; but the suspicion is as baseless as it is ungrateful. The special characteristic of the Charter is its equal distribution of civil rights. The clergy, the nobles, the commons, each class and all classes, share in the privileges which it confers.

In this just solicitude for the people, to quote again from Mr Hallam, and in the moderation which infringed upon no essential prerogative of the crown, we may perceive a liberality and patriotism very unlike the selfishness which is sometimes rashly imputed to those ancient barons. And, as far as we are guided by historical testimony, we are justified in specially ascribing the glory of this monument, of this just example of reform without revolution, to two great men, the pillars of our Church and State—Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, and William, Earl of Pembroke. To their temperate zeal for a legal government England was indebted during that critical period for the two greatest blessings that patriotic statesmen could confer ; the establishment of civil liberty upon an immovable basis, and the preservation of national independence under the ancient line of sovereigns, which rasher men were about to exchange for the dominion of France.

It is now time that we lay before the reader the principal provisions of the Charter, so highly but so justly extolled.

The franchises of the city of London, and of all towns and boroughs, were declared inviolable.

Full freedom of commerce was guaranteed to alien merchants ; a stipulation calculated to encourage foreigners in introducing new arts and manufactures into England.

That the Court of Common Pleas might be independent of

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the sovereign, it was fixed at Westminster, instead of following the King's person in his various migrations.

Certain checks were arranged upon the despotic manner in which the forest laws were enforced.

Reliefs, or fines, were limited to a certain sum according to the rank of the tenant; the waste and extravagance committed by the so-called guardians of wealthy wards were strictly restrained; the disparagement in matrimony of female wards forbidden, and widows freed from the shameless tyranny of compulsory marriage. These regulations, extending to the sub-vassals of the crown, redressed the most clamant wrongs of every military tenant in England.

But still more valuable were the clauses which secured the freeman's property and personal liberty, and which afterwards formed the foundation of the Habeas Corpus Act.

No freeman shall be taken or imprisoned, or be dispossessed of his freehold, or liberties, or free customs, or be outlawed or exiled, or any otherwise destroyed; nor will we pass upon him, nor send upon him, but by lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land. We will sell to no man, we will not deny nor delay to any man, justice or right.

In these words are embodied an ample security for the "two main rights of civil society"—protection for the person and protection for property. From the epoch of John's Charter, it obviously became a recognised principle of the English constitution that no man should be dispossessed of his own or detained in prison without fair trial.

By other clauses, which it is unnecessary to repeat, various abuses, springing from the feudal system, were either abolished or mitigated.

From this era, remarks Hallam,¹ a new soul was infused into the people of England. Her liberties, at the best long in

¹ Hallam's "Middle Ages," ii. 329.

abeyance, became a tangible possession, and her indefinite aspirations for the laws of Edward the Confessor were changed into a steady regard for the great Charter. Pass but from the history of Roger de Hoveden to that of Matthew Paris, from the second Henry to the third, and judge whether the victorious struggle had not excited an energy of public spirit to which the nation was before a stranger. The strong man, in the language of Milton, was aroused from sleep, and shook his invincible locks.

Thenceforward, the great Charter, though it was supposed to acquire additional security by being frequently confirmed, was always considered as a fundamental law. The last confirmation, which included any variation, took place in the ninth year of Henry III., and, as thus confirmed and modified, it remains in our statute-book. According to Coke, it has been thirty-two times solemnly ratified.

Built upon this broad and impregnable foundation, our constitution has been gradually elevated and extended by the wise labours of our forefathers, until, with all its defects, it has become the envy of surrounding nations, and the model on which the empires sprang from our loins have endeavoured to fashion their own laws. With judicious care let us continue to improve it, and adapt it more thoroughly to the requirements of each succeeding age; avoiding, on the one hand, a silly craving for constant innovation, and, on the other, a servile adherence to musty precedents; remembering, in all we do :—

“ We must be free or die : who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spoke, the faith and morals hold
That Milton held, in every thing have sprung
From earth’s best blood, have title manifold.” ¹

¹ Wordsworth’s “Sonnets on Liberty.”



CHAPTER III.

CLOSING SCENES OF A GREAT CAREER.

“History, which may be called just and perfect history, is of three kinds, according to the object which it propoundeth or pretendeth to represent ; for it either representeth a time, a person, or an action. The first we call chronicles ; the second, lives ; and the third, narratives or relations. Of these, although chronicles be the most complete and absolute kind of history, and hath most estimation and glory, yet lives excelleth in profit and use, and narratives or relations in verity or sincerity.”—LORD BACON.

JOHAN had affixed his signature to Magna Charta, but without any honest intention of abiding by its provisions. The ink was scarcely dry before he prepared to forswear himself. Despatching his confidential emissaries to the Continent, he contrived, with a rapidity which gives us a high idea of the intellectual force of the man when he once roused himself from his gross indulgences, to raise an army of French and Flemish mercenaries, at whose head he took the field early in the month of October.

On the 13th he laid siege to Rochester Castle, which was bravely defended by William d'Albini, but compelled to surrender to an overwhelming force. He would fain have hung its commander, and all the knights of its garrison, on a gibbet, and was only dissuaded by the strong representations of his confidant, Savarie de Mauleon, who wisely reminded him :—

"My lord King, the war is not yet ended, and therefore you should carefully consider how its fortunes may change. If you order us to hang these men now, the barons, our enemies, if, by a like event they capture me, or other nobles of your army, will follow your example, and hang us. Therefore, do not let this happen, or no one will fight in your cause."¹

While the war was dragging its slow length along, Langton resolved upon visiting Rome, to plead before Pope Innocent the cause of the barons and people of England, and counteract, if it might be so, the crafty intrigues of the King's envoy, the sub-deacon Pandulf. John was by no means willing that the barons should have so powerful and able an advocate at the Papal court; but Langton having been summoned as a Roman Cardinal to attend a council at Rome in 1215, he was unable to prohibit his journey. The Archbishop, therefore, completed his preparations, and the ship he had engaged was lying off Dover to embark him and his suite, when he was suddenly visited by Pandulf, who had returned from Italy, by the Bishop of Winchester, and the Abbot of Reading, who announced themselves entrusted by the Pope with certain bulls, annulling Magna Charta, and threatening the barons with excommunication unless they laid down their arms. They repeated the Pope's commands that the Archbishop should order the said bulls to be published every Sunday and holy day in the churches of his province. Langton boldly refused. The Papal commissioners then pronounced him contumacious, declared him suspended, and prohibited him from entering a church, or celebrating Divine service. Still undaunted and resolute, Langton proceeded on his journey, while John rejoiced in his supposed discomfiture, and caused his suspension to be proclaimed throughout the country.

¹ Matthew Paris.

The Papal bulls were issued, but the barons and their adherents treated them with contemptuous indifference, remarking that it was evil for him who justified the wicked for the sake of reward. Irritated by the failure of his threats, the Pope issued another bull, excommunicating all who opposed the King. "We are extremely astonished and justly annoyed," so ran the document, "that although our well-beloved son in Christ, John, the illustrious King of England, hath given satisfaction, beyond what was to be expected, to God and His Church, especially to our brother the Archbishop of Canterbury and his suffragan bishops, some of these very prelates, showing no due respect, if any, to the business of the holy cross, the mandate of the Apostolic See, and their oath of fealty, have not rendered assistance or shown good-will to the King against the disturbers of that kingdom, which, by right of dominion, belongs to the Church of Rome, as if they were cognisant of, not to say associates in, this very conspiracy. Is it in this way they protect those who have assumed the cross? Worse than Saracens, these prelates of the Church of England would drive from his realm a King in whom is our best hope of deliverance for the Holy Land; therefore, that the insolence of such men may not prevail, not only to the danger of the Church of England, but also to the ruin of other kingdoms, and, above all, to the subversion of all the matters of Christ, we, on behalf of Almighty God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and by the authority of the apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, lay the fetters of excommunication on all the disturbers of the King and kingdom of England, as well as on all accomplices and abettors of theirs, and place their possessions under the ecclesiastical interdict; and we most strictly order the Archbishop aforesaid, and his fellow bishops, by virtue of their obedience, solemnly to proclaim this our sentence throughout all England, on every

Sunday and feast-day, amidst the ringing of bells, and with candles burning, until the said barons shall give satisfaction to the King for his losses, and for the injuries they have inflicted on him, and shall faithfully return to their duty. We also, on our own behalf, enjoin all the vassals of the said King, in remission of their sins, to give advice and render assistance to the said King in opposing such transgressors. And if any bishop neglect to fulfil this our injunction, be it known to him that he will be suspended from his episcopal duties, and the obedience of those under him will be withdrawn ; because it is right that those who show neglect to their superior should not receive the obedience of their inferiors. Therefore, that the fulfilment of our mandate may not be impeded through the irresolution of any, we have entrusted the duty of excommunicating the aforesaid barons to you, together with the other details of this matter ; charging you, by these our apostolic letters, immediately, and postponing all appeal, to proceed as ye may think expedient.”¹

Langton reached Rome in November 1215 ; but he speedily found that he had no longer any favour in the eyes of his old patron, and that his representations on behalf of the patriots were of no avail against the bribes and promises of the King's envoys. His sentence of suspension was solemnly confirmed by the Pope and council ; and though it was afterwards mitigated in its severest provisions, he was prohibited from returning to England. Langton submitted in silence, and with his usual equanimity ; somewhat comforted, perhaps, by a striking proof of sympathy on the part of the canons of York, who elected to their vacant archbishopric, in opposition to the King's favourite, the Bishop of Worcester, Stephen's bold and

¹ The Papal bulls are given in Rymer's "Foedera" (vol. i., *sub anno* 1215), and should be studied by the reader, quite as much as illustrations of Papal want of political sagacity as of Papal arrogance.

able brother, Simon. It is true that the Pope refused to sanction the election ; but it was not the less a proof of sympathy with the Primate, and, let us add, a sign of the growing independence of the Church of England.

On behalf of his vassal, the Pope had exercised his utmost powers. It has been justly remarked that he had cursed Magna Charta, had cursed the patriots, had cursed the barons of England, had cursed its bishops, had cursed the city of London, and suspended the Archbishop of Canterbury. Such a plenitude of malediction was never paralleled except in the case of the great Lord Cardinal in Mr Barham's "Jackdaw of Rheims."¹

" Never was heard such a terrible curse !
But what gave rise
To no little surprise,
Nobody seemed one penny the worse."

The condition of England, however, was deplorable. A prey to the worst kind of civil war, its inhabitants experienced the most terrible sufferings. And yet, as Dean Milman eloquently remarks,² when John let loose his furious hordes of adventurers from Flanders, Brabant, Poitou, and other countries, like wild beasts upon his unhappy realm ; when he himself ravaged in the north, and his bastard brother, the Earl of Salisbury, in the south ; when the whole land was wasted with fire and sword ; when plunder, murder, torture, rape, raged without control ; when agriculture and even markets had wholly ceased, the buyers and sellers meeting only in churchyards, because they were sanctuaries ; when the clergy were treated with the same impartial cruelty as the rest of the people, John was still the ally, the vassal, and under the special protection of the Pope.

¹ Barham's "Ingoldsby Legends."

² Milman's "Latin Christianity," v. 301.

Such are the tender mercies of the Church of Rome towards a people struggling for their liberties !¹

With Stephen Langton virtually, if not nominally, a prisoner in Rome, the barons soon found themselves in want of a leader, and turned, in their rage and desperation, to Louis, the son of Philip Augustus of France. Such a step can only be justifiable under the most extreme circumstances ; and, happily, its evil consequences were averted by two events which followed closely one upon another—the death of Pope Innocent (July 16), and of King John (October 19), the worst enemies English liberties have ever known. Henry III. succeeded to his father's throne, and during his minority the country was ably and firmly governed by the great Earl of Pembroke and the sagacious Hubert de Burgh. It was not until 1218, however, that Langton was permitted to return to England. He landed at Dover in May, and was warmly received by all classes of the people. Soon afterwards, and, it may be, at his instigation, the great Charter was solemnly confirmed by the young King at a council held in London, the Archbishop affixing his seal to the glorious document. On the 17th of May 1220, Henry was crowned at Westminster by the Primate—his former coronation at Gloucester, ten days after his father's death, having lacked some of the requisite formalities. Thus was the Archbishop privileged to see the realisation of his most ardent hopes for the freedom and tranquillity of his country.

In his later career there are few events which call for any special notice. It was under his direction that the body of "St Thomas of Canterbury" was translated to its new and magnificent shrine in Canterbury Cathedral. The removal

¹ See the terrible picture painted by Wendover (*sub anno* 1216, pp. 351-353) of the misery which England underwent in the last year of King John's disgraceful reign. It is evidently truthful in all its details.

was effected during the night of the 6th of July, as Robert of Gloucester tells us :¹—

“ The King wende thro to Canterbury, and the hire men al so,
To mine vp ² Sein Thomas’ body, and in to crine do ; ³
Arst ⁴ he adde ileye an erthe vnssrined vifti zer. ⁵
Of Engelonde and of France so muche folc ther com ther,
That alle contreye aboute vanethe amonge it mizte. ⁶
Ther now hii name him vp priueliche ⁷ bi nizte.”

The Archbishop was present, attended by the Bishop of Salisbury, the prior, and the monks. The bones and skull were reverently deposited in a coffin of iron ; and on the morrow, the coffin, borne on the shoulders of great nobles, was carried in solemn procession to the new chapel at the east end of the cathedral.

In the following year the Archbishop preached an anniversary sermon in the cathedral, which gives the reader no idea of the eminent abilities Langton undoubtedly possessed, but is a mere theological exercise, full of subtleties more ingenious than convincing.⁸

Of the last hours of the great Primate we know nothing. He died on the 9th of July 1228, probably at his favourite residence, the archiepiscopal palace of Slindon in Sussex, and was interred, with his predecessors, in the glorious Cathedral of Canterbury, where the guide still points out the stone coffin containing the dust of one of England’s truest patriots and noblest heroes.⁹

¹ Robert of Gloucester’s “Chronicle,” ii. 518 (ed. Hearne).

² Take up. ³ And place it in the shrine. ⁴ Before. ⁵ Fifty years.

⁶ The country round about could scarcely contain them. ⁷ Privately.

⁸ It is published in Giles’s edition of the “Works of Thomas à Becket,” vol. ii. pp. 267, 297.

⁹ Langton, we may add, deserves our respect as a voluminous writer. He composed a poem, the “Hexamum,” on the six days of the Creation ; a Life of Richard I ; a canticle on the Lord’s Passion ; and commentaries on most of the books of the Old Testament.

SIMON DE MONTFORT,

EARL OF LEICESTER.

*Il est apelé de Montfort,
Il est et Mond, et si est Fort,
Si ad grand chevalerie,
Ce voir et jì ni acort,
Il eime droit, et hat le tort,
Si avera la mestrie.
El Mond est viréement,
Là ou lu comun a ly concent,
De la terre loée;
C'est ly Lucus de Leycester
Que bout et jous si puet estre
De cele renommée.¹*

“POLITICAL SONGS OF ENGLAND,”

Edited by WRIGHT *for the Camden Society.*

¹ He is called De Montfort, and he is both Mount and Fort, and an illustrious knight, who, I swear it, because he loves the right and hates the wrong, shall gain the mastery. Truly he is a Mount of Refuge, lauded by all the land, to whom the commonalty flee. Well, then, may the Earl of Leicester confide and rejoice in such honour.

CHRONOLOGICAL LANDMARKS

FROM THE

DEATH OF JOHN TO THE BATTLE OF LEWES.

- A.D. 1216. King John died of fever, incited by mental and physical weariness, at the Castle of Newark, October 18. On the 28th his son Henry was crowned, but not anointed, at Gloucester—

“ Henry was King raised after his fader fan,
A Sein Simondes day and Sein Jude at Gloucester anan.”

On the 11th of November, by a great council held at Bristol, the Earl of Pembroke was chosen *Rector Regis et Regni*—“Regent of the King and kingdom.”

- A.D. 1217. The Papal legate excommunicated Louis of France, whose partisans rapidly decreased in numbers as the national spirit began to reassert itself. Reinforcements arrived from France, and the men of London remained faithful to the Prince they had invited to assist them ; but in a great battle at Lincoln (May 10) the King's forces completely defeated the French, and in a famous sea-fight in the Channel (August 24), the French fleet was almost destroyed by Hubert de Burgh. Louis then sued for peace, and a treaty was signed, on an islet in the Thames, near Kingston, September 11.
- A.D. 1219. Death of the Earl of Pembroke ; the Regency conferred upon Hubert de Burgh, who ruled the kingdom with firmness but severity.
- A.D. 1223. By a Papal bull, Henry is declared competent to the performance of all royal acts.

- A.D. 1225. The increasing power of the people, as represented by the royal council, should here be noted. The King was compelled by his necessities to apply to the council for grants of money, and no grant was allowed until some concession of power or prerogative had been made by the crown. Thus, in 1225, when a quarrel with France occurred, Hubert de Burgh demanded an aid of one-fifteenth upon all personal estates. The aid was not refused, but the council demanded a solemn confirmation of the Great Charter, which, in the form it then assumed, still retains its place in our statute-book.
- A.D. 1227. In this year the King declared himself of age.
- A.D. 1228. Henry undertook an expedition into Wales, but, with the vacillation which seems to have been his predominant mental characteristic, speedily abandoned it.
- A.D. 1229. An army was levied for the invasion of France, but the King quarrelling with his able minister, Hubert de Burgh, on the most frivolous pretext, dismissed his troops.
- A.D. 1230. In 1230 Henry visited his Continental dominions, and received homage in Poitou and Gascony, whose adventurers he thenceforth gladly welcomed to his court, bestowing the principal offices of the state upon unknown men of foreign birth. A profound feeling of discontent was excited among the English barons by the royal weakness and incapacity. "The beginning of the struggle," says Matthew Paris, "between the King and the barons was his retention of the foreigners, whom for a long time he had supported and cherished, contrary to the will of the English-born and the welfare of his kingdom." These despicable favourites regarded England as "an inexhaustible well, which could not be dried," and seized on the richest estates and highest dignities. It is recorded that the benefices held by foreigners yielded an annual income of 70,000 marks (equal, as money is now valued, to some £500,000). The Queen's uncle, Peter of Savoy, received the Castles of Pevensey and Hastings, and Richmond in Yorkshire. William de Valence was created Earl of Pembroke; John de Aigue Blanche, a Savoyard, was made Bishop of Hereford; Boniface, another of the Queen's uncles, Archbishop of Canterbury. The very cooks of the royal household grew fat on the plunder of

the people, who, meanwhile, suffered the worst ills of famine.

- A.D. 1236. Marriage of Henry III. to Eleanor, daughter of the Count of Provence.
- A.D. 1239. Birth of Edward, afterwards Edward I.
- A.D. 1248. Henry resolved to establish a fair, for the replenishment of his revenue, at Westminster. It lasted a fortnight, and during that period all the traffic of London was prohibited by his command, in order that the merchants should be forced to buy and sell at Westminster.
- A.D. 1249-50. The citizens of London grew indignant at this and similar acts of arbitrary oppression, and at length exhibited so menacing a temper that the King took alarm. Assembling them in Westminster Hall, he himself, "and as if with rising tears, entreated that each and all of the citizens would, with mouth and heart, forgive him for his anger, malevolence, and rancour towards them." The feud between the King and the city, however, continued to increase, and was fomented by the unwise interference of the Queen and the insolence of the royal courtiers.
- A.D. 1253. Henry applied to his Parliament, as the great council of nobles was now called, for a subsidy to enable him to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. After a keen debate it was granted, but with the provision that the expenditure should be at the discretion of the barons, and a promise was extorted from the King that he would thenceforth observe the conditions of Magna Charta in good faith. The Archbishop of Canterbury pronounced a sentence of excommunication against "all violators of the liberties of the Church, or of the ancient and approved customs of the kingdom; and especially the liberties and free customs which are contained in the charters of the common liberties of England and the forests." While the sentence was being uttered, all who were present, except the King, held lighted candles; and at its conclusion these were thrown down and extinguished, with the usual denunciation. The King, whose refusal to hold the lighted candle had excited suspicion, then stood up, and said, "So help me God, all these terms I will faithfully observe."

The pilgrimage, however, was not undertaken, and the money was spent in feasts and revels at Bordeaux.¹

A.D. 1258. The discontent of all classes broke out into open revolt, and an alliance between the barons and the citizens being cemented by the sagacity and genius of Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, who is accepted as the popular leader, stringent

¹ A remarkably able sketch of the course of events in Henry's reign, and a forcible exposition of his character, have been put forward by a recent writer in the *Quarterly Review* (No. cccxxvii.) The following condensation cannot fail to be acceptable to our readers:—

Nothing is so hard to realise as chaos, and nothing nearer to chaos can be conceived than the government of Henry III. He aimed at making the crown virtually independent of the barons. The sons of the men who had extorted the Great Charter were told that it was their business to find money for every rash enterprise which the King's Continental relations and advisers might suggest; but that they must not presume to demand the resignation of one officer of state, or to murmur if the most important castles of the realm and the first places in the state were committed to the hands of aliens. In all this, his connection with Louis IX., whose brother-in-law he became, was certainly a misfortune to him. In France the royal power during the last fifty years had been steadily on the advance; in England it had as steadily receded; and Henry was now hearing from the other side of the Channel maxims of government and ideas of royal authority which were utterly inapplicable to the actual state of his own kingdom. This, like a premature Stuart, Henry was incapable of perceiving; a King he was, and a King he would be, in his own sense of the word.

It is evident that, with such a task before him, he needed, for the most shadowy chance of success, an iron strength of will, singular self-control, great forethought and care in collecting and husbanding his resources, and a rare talent for administration, the sagacity to choose and the self-reliance to trust his counsellors. And not one of these various qualities did Henry possess. Will he had none. To know who was nearest the person of Henry was to know the current policy of the hour; and nothing was so dangerous to a courtier as to undertake some distant public service. The recklessness of his accusations against Hubert de Burgh and Montfort is but a specimen of the license which he continually allowed both to his temper and his tongue. As for husbanding his resources, he was a lifelong debtor. He was profuse himself, with occasional intervals of an almost morbid economy. But the prodigality of his gifts almost exceeds belief.

Of the rest of Henry's qualities it is almost idle to speak. To give confidence blindly, and to withdraw it suddenly, was a serious failing, of which we have seen something already; add to it a profound distrust of ability, an impatience of contradiction, and an habitual disregard for truth, and the portrait is well-nigh complete.

But the crowning offence of Henry in the eyes of Englishmen was one for which the associations of his early years were in a great degree answerable. He had grown up to regard a Pope as a being to whom no contradiction should be offered, and a legate as the only adviser in whose singleness of purpose and knowledge of affairs he could place implicit confidence.

There have been few periods in which such a temper of the royal mind would not

measures were adopted for limiting the King's authority, generally known as the "Provisions of Oxford."

A.D. 1264. King Louis of France was accepted as arbiter between the King and his barons. Civil war renewed. Battle of Lewes, May 1312.

have given rise to serious embarrassment ; but in the time of Henry III. it was ruinous. In the previous reign the first great shock had been given to the popular reverence for Rome. It was then first felt that, on questions vital to England, the interests of Rome and of the English Church might be not only different, but absolutely opposed. The excommunication of Stephen Langton was an excommunication of the English Church ; for he fell under the Papal ban for expressing English feelings and for maintaining English rights. But it was the great political triumph of Innocent III. that in reality sealed the fate of Roman influence in England. The surrender of the English crown, to be held in fief of Rome, was an act eventually as important to the religious liberties of England as was the Great Charter itself to our civil freedom. From the moment of that surrender there arose a national, as opposed to a Papal, party in the Church ; a party which, loyal to Rome in things spiritual, repudiated with the emphasis of freedom her encroachments on the political independence of the realm.

After the fall of De Burgh, Henry threw himself unreservedly into the hands of aliens, whose interest and business it was to maintain the Papal influence. And thus were definitely formed the two great parties out of whose antagonism the War of the Barons arose, under whose influence the relations between the crown and people of England were remodelled, and out of whose enduring conflict rose indirectly the political principles which contributed so largely to bring about the reformation of the English Church.



TABLE OF CONTEMPORARY SOVEREIGNS.

ENGLAND.

A.D. 1199-1216. John.	A.D. 1216-65. Henry III.
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SCOTLAND.

A.D. 1165-1214. William.	A.D. 1214-49. Alexander II.
A.D. 1249. Alexander III.	

FRANCE.

A.D. 1180-1223. Philip II.	A.D. 1223-26. Louis VIII.
A.D. 1226. Louis IX.	

SPAIN.

A.D. 1196-1230. Pedro II. of Ara- gon.	A.D. 1230-52. Ferdinand III. of Castile and Leon.
A.D. 1252. Alphonso X.	

GERMANY.

A.D. 1191-1209. Henry VI.	A.D. 1212-51. Frederick II.
A.D. 1209-12. Otto IV.	A.D. 1251-54. Interregnum.
A.D. 1254. Rudolph.	

POPES OF ROME.

A.D. 1198-1216. Innocent III.	A.D. 1241-43. Celestine IV.
A.D. 1216-27. Honorius III.	A.D. 1243-54. Innocent IV.
A.D. 1227-41. Gregory IX.	A.D. 1254. Alexander IV.

[The European sovereigns contemporary with the Barons' War were—Alexander III., of Scotland; Louis IX., of France; Alphonso V., of Castile and Leon; Rudolph, Emperor of Germany; and Pope Alexander IV.]

AUTHORITIES.

* The editions used by the present writer are thus indicated.

The *contemporary authorities* for the Barons' War and the public life of Simon de Montfort are numerous and valuable. The principal are :— Chronicle of Peter Langtoft, translated by Robert de Brune (edit. Hearne);* Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester (edit. Hearne);* “*Historia Major*” of Matthew Paris; Chronicle of Matthew of Westminster.

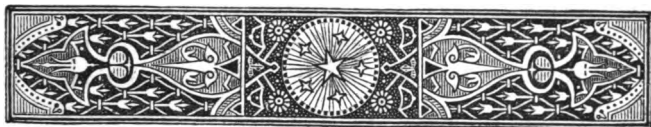
Reference must also be made for details of peculiar interest to the “*Miracles of Simon de Montfort*,” and the Chronicle of William de Rishanger, both of which have been edited by Mr J. O. Halliwell for the Camden Society (edit. 1840).*

Indications of the public feeling towards the great Earl will be found in the “*Political Songs*,” edited for the Camden Society by Mr Wright.*

Our list of primary authorities concludes with the Chronicle of the Monks of Mailros; the “*Monumenta Franciscana*,” edited for the Master of the Rolls by Mr J. S. Brown (edit. 1858);* Hemingford; and “*Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi quondam Lincolnensis Epistolæ*,” edited for the Master of the Rolls by Mr H. R. Luard (edit. 1861).*

Among *later authorities* we content ourselves with naming, first and foremost, the valuable and elaborate summary entitled “*The Barons' War, including the Battles of Lewes and Evesham*,” by W. G. Blauuw (edit. 1844);* Lower's “*Handbook to Lewes*” (for local details); Thorne's “*Rambles by Rivers*,” Dr Lingard's “*History of England*,” and an able article in the *Quarterly Review*, No. ccxxxvii.

Various documents connected with the period will be found in Rymer's “*Fœdera*,” the “*Charter Rolls*,” and similar compendiums.



BOOK III.

SIMON DE MONTFORT.

A.D. 1200-1265.

CHAPTER I.

THE LEADER OF THE BARONS.

"Unconquered patriot, formed by ancient lore
The love of ancient freedom to restore ;
Who nobly acted what he boldly thought,
And sealed by death the lessons which he taught."

TO Simon de Montfort England owes a debt of gratitude which she has been slow to pay. One of the greatest of her worthies, he has nevertheless filled but a small place in her affections, and his name has been almost unknown to men who have warmed into enthusiasm at the valour of a Warwick or the military ability of a "Harry of Monmouth." Yet it is to the political sagacity and wide popular sympathies of Simon de Montfort that we are indebted for that parliamentary representation of the people which is the very mainspring of constitutional government. In other words, it was he who first recognised the claims of the commonalty to

a voice in the national councils. And it was he who, by giving them this voice, first elevated them from a position of inferiority, disgrace, and helplessness, to one of power and influence, until, as the system which he founded worked out its natural development, they became the most considerable, as they are the most numerous, order in the State. It was Simon de Montfort who, by thus instituting a check on the despotism of the crown, and the absolutism of the aristocracy, laid broad the basis of the only form of government which seems fitted to secure the happiness, prosperity, and concord of a free nation.

Yet the Founder of the English House of Commons—his just title, and a title which implies so much!—has had no biographer. The vicissitudes of his fame, says a recent writer,¹ have, by a singular chance, almost equalled those of an eventful life. Honoured by a host of contemporaries as a statesman and a hero, worshipped by many generations as a saint and martyr, he gradually faded from recollection, until, with the revival of classical literature, he passed into that oblivion which absorbed all things mediæval. The first serious attempt to rescue from forgetfulness the great events with which his name must ever be associated, was made by Thomas Carte, *Englishman*, as he proudly writes himself on the title-page of his English history. Carte, a judicious if not a brilliant historian, was the model of every succeeding writer for upwards of half a century; and the sentence of the bigoted Nonjuror, condemning Montfort as “a base and ungrateful rebel,” was implicitly accepted as impartial by men who, had they studied his career for themselves, must have arrived at a very different conclusion.

Sir James Mackintosh, as the authority we have quoted remarks, was the first to perceive that, as Montfort rebelled, he was probably a good man; but never having studied the facts,

¹ *Quarterly Review*, vol. cix. p. 16.

he contented himself with a vague expression of general sympathy. Since his time a generation has arisen in which no road to fame has been found so easy as to write the panegyric of some man of mark whom the common consent of mankind had branded with perpetual infamy. The art of "whitewashing" blackened reputations has found some skilful and popular professors. We have seen Nero rehabilitated, and Richard III., and Robespierre, and Henry VIII.; but no one has arisen to do justice to a great man unjustly maligned, to an English worthy most shamefully neglected: we have had no life of Montfort. The nearest approach has been Mr Blauuw's "War of the Barons,"—to which, in the following pages, we are largely indebted,—and an able biographical sketch in the *Quarterly Review*, from the hand of one fully able to appreciate the grandeur of the hero's character.¹ Yet never could historian hope for a more stirring or picturesque theme.

Simon de Montfort, born in the opening years of the thirteenth century, was the fourth and youngest son of that great captain and mad fanatic whose crusade against the Albigenses has covered him with enduring obloquy. His mother was Alice, daughter of Bouchard, Sire de Montmorency and Earun, and Constable of France. By right of his mother, who was sister and co-heiress of Robert de Beaumont, last Earl of Leicester of that line, the elder Simon had inherited half the estate and borne the title of an Earl of Leicester. In a rebellion against his English sovereign, he lost both lands and honours; and though in the latter years of King John he regained the former, it does not appear that he resumed the latter. On the death of this stern warrior, the earldom was claimed by Amauri, his

¹ We may, perhaps, be allowed to state, that in a little book entitled "Memorable Battles in English History," published in 1863, we included a memoir of Montfort, which, however deficient in fulness, was not wanting in enthusiasm.

eldest son ; but a change had come over the spirit of the time. The King of England refused to accept "a divided allegiance." A feeling of nationality had been developed ; and Amauri was informed that he must abandon his rank and inheritance in France if he sought to do homage for an earldom in England. "Under which king, Bezonian?"

A long and wearisome negotiation ensued between the King and the powerful baron ; and in the end, Amauri was permitted to surrender his English claims to his youngest brother, Simon. His second brother, Guy, had become Count of Bigorre by marriage ; his third brother, Robert, was dead.

Simon de Montfort did homage for the Earldom of Leicester on the 13th of August 1231, and thenceforth became an Englishman. From the thorough knowledge he afterwards displayed of the wants and interests of his adopted country, and his ardent spirit of nationality, we shall perhaps be justified in concluding that he had been educated and bred in England, or, at all events, had spent there a part of his youth and early manhood.

A man of bold and aspiring intellect, he sought on two occasions to extend his influence by marriage among the great families of France. Twice, says a writer already quoted, he found the greatest heiresses of the time not unwilling to unite themselves to a younger son, who, to an illustrious and almost royal name, added the far rarer distinction of a genius which made him conspicuous in every court, while his closer intimacies were formed with the profoundest scholars of his day. Twice his matrimonial ambition was defeated by the jealousy of the French crown. Recognising at length that his true sphere of action lay in England, he seems to have determined on seeking an English alliance ; and, as "a gentleman of choice blood, education, and feature," he won the good graces of the beautiful sister of Henry III., Eleanor, the widowed

Countess of Pembroke. The King, whose refined taste could appreciate the manners and accomplishments of Montfort, looked with favour on the marriage ; but as Eleanor, on her husband's death in 1231, had publicly taken a vow of perpetual chastity, there lay a formidable obstacle in the way of its accomplishment. It may have been at the suggestion of Eleanor herself that, at last, it was celebrated secretly, for she would know enough of her brother's character to feel that he would shrink from openly confronting an opposition which he would not have been unwilling secretly to evade.

At all events, the marriage took place at the altar of St Stephen's Chapel, on the 17th of January 1238 ; the King giving away the bride, and a simple chaplain officiating as priest.

It was soon afterwards disclosed, and a storm arose on all sides, which threatened, at first, to overwhelm both the Earl and his Countess. The great barons were indignant that the hand of a daughter of England should be disposed of without their approval ; the Church declared that no marriage could be valid with one who had taken a vow of perpetual chastity. The opposition of the nobles was headed by Richard, Earl of Cornwall, the King's brother, who armed his retainers, and threatened to seize the Cinque Ports. But Montfort gained admission to his presence, and so far allayed his anger that he persuaded his fellow-barons to rest content with the Earl's dismissal from the council. To pacify the Church, Simon was compelled to visit Rome (March 1238), leaving his wife at his castle of Kenilworth. On his way he visited his imperial brother-in-law, Frederick II., who had wedded Isabella, the sister of Henry III. We are informed by the chronicler that he drew his sword in the Emperor's cause, and so secured his advocacy with the court of Rome. Overcome by entreaties, arguments, and bribes, Pope Gregory annulled the unlucky vow of chastity, and ratified the marriage.

On the 14th of October, Simon returned to England triumphant, and was received by the King and all the royalists with the *osculum pacis*, or kiss of peace. From the court he hastened to join his wife at Kenilworth, where, in November, she gave birth to a son, "to the strength and comfort of the realm, for it was feared the Queen would be barren." The Bishop of Chester, at the time, was on his way to London, but "in order the more to ingratiate himself with the King," he stayed awhile at Kenilworth, and baptized the new-born.¹

So far it is evident that Montfort was one of Henry's most trusted favourites. He restored him to a seat in the royal council; on the 2d of February 1239, he created him Earl of Leicester;² and on the 21st of June, he invited him to assist as godfather and High Steward at the baptism of Prince Edward. The sky was radiant, and no clouds forebode a storm. Yet, on the 9th of August, when the Earl and Countess came to attend the churching of the Queen in Westminster Abbey, a storm broke out. No sooner did he enter the royal presence than Henry began to rail at him, told him he was an excommunicated man, and bade him begone from the church.

Amazed and confounded, the Earl and his wife withdrew to Winchester House, which had been lent to them by Henry, the See of Winchester being then vacant. But the angry King, with a pitiful want of dignity, ordered them to be ejected. In vain they returned to the King, and "with tears and lamentations" endeavoured to appease his wrath. Without any sense of shame for himself or his sister, Henry turned upon the Earl: "You seduced my sister before her marriage, and it was only when I discovered this, that I reluctantly gave her to you to avoid scandal. That her vow of chastity might prove no impediment, you went to Rome, and by costly presents and great

¹ Matthew Paris, *sub anno* 1238.

² He had before enjoyed only the honour, not the earldom.

promises, bribed the Roman court into permitting what you knew to be unlawful. The Archbishop of Canterbury knew the facts, and made them known to the Pope, but the truth was compelled to yield to Roman avarice; and now that you have failed to pay the money you promised, you have received the excommunication you so justly deserve. And, to crown your wickedness, you have made me, without my knowledge, answerable for the moneys you promised."

On hearing these words, says the chronicler,¹ the Earl blushed with shame, and at evening, embarking in a small boat on the Thames, with his wife and their attendants, he proceeded in all haste to the sea-coast, and immediately sailed from England.

Now, are the charges here recorded true or false? If true, our judgment of Montfort's character would necessarily be much affected by them.

On the money charge, we say, with a recent writer, there is no need to dwell. In such a case, the chances of a misunderstanding were not inconsiderable; and, apart from the circumstance that without the King's authority it is most improbable that Montfort would have pledged his name, as the act must certainly have been discovered, we may assert that the whole tenor of his life contradicts the royal accusation. He was incapable of such a meanness.

The more serious charge is contradicted by the fact that, for more than a year after Montfort's return, Henry treated him with the utmost favour and distinction. According to his own account, he knew of the Earl's guilt from the very first. Why did he wait so long before he upbraided him with it? Why did he restore his sister's seducer to his council, raise him to an earldom, and make him the godfather of the future King of England?

¹ Matthew Paris, *sub anno* 1239.

By one of the purest and noblest of Montfort's contemporaries, the justly celebrated Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, the accusation was disbelieved. It is a curious circumstance that almost at the same time Henry advanced a similar charge against Hubert de Burgh; and it is indeed a well-known fact that throughout his reign the vacillating and unscrupulous monarch never hesitated to pour out the most unfounded calumnies on the heads of those who offended him.

We conclude, then, that the charges were absolutely false; but why were they made, and made at such a conjuncture?

The probable cause is to be found in Montfort's visit to the Emperor. It was the imperial letter, as much as the Earl's bribes, which had extorted the ratification of his marriage from the Roman court; and Frederick, who a year before had been unprecedentedly powerful, was now in difficulties, and under the ban of the Church. Great exertions had been made to detach Henry from his alliance with his brother-in-law; and indeed, within a fortnight of Montfort's disgrace, the Papal bull excommunicating the Emperor was published in England. It may be surmised that, so long as Montfort remained in the council, such a step had been found impossible, and that consequently the Papal party determined on his disgrace. A want of punctuality in the payment of the money promised to Rome would serve as an admirable excuse for an excommunication; and an excommunication, in the eyes of the superstitious Henry, would render possible any charges of criminality invented against its victim.

Montfort retired to the Continent. Here he seems to have found means, after a short delay, to pacify both the Pope and the King—in itself a proof that the latter could not really have believed the accusations he advanced; and in April 1240 he again returned to England, and was well received by Henry. His stay was short, however; his object being to raise money

for the crusade which he had resolved to undertake, by way, it is said, of satisfying his scrupulous conscience, which was still rendered uneasy by the circumstances of his marriage.

According to some authorities, Montfort was a twelvemonth in the East ; according to others, he never carried out his project. The balance of evidence seems unquestionably in favour of the former conclusion, and we do not think the Earl was a man who readily abandoned a scheme he had once matured. And it is assuredly a strong confirmation that, in June 1241, the barons, knights, and citizens of Jerusalem requested the Emperor to appoint him Regent of the kingdom during the minority of Jerusalem.

Returning to England, we find him by the side of Henry in the disastrous campaign of 1242 against the French. He distinguished himself by his valour and military conduct at the battle of Saintes ; and at Taillebury his sword saved the King from being captured. At the conclusion of the war he resided for a time at Bordeaux, the capital of Gascony, gaining knowledge of the affairs of that province which afterwards proved of essential service.

Henceforward he becomes so mixed up with the public affairs of England, and plays so conspicuous a part in their adjustment, that his biography cannot be separated from the history of the kingdom. In 1246 he was one of the twelve nobles appointed to inquire into the country's financial condition ; and in 1248, when, between the intrigues of Navarre on the one side, and France on the other, the loss of Gascony seemed inevitable, he was appointed, with special powers, to the governorship of that province for a period of six years. The King may not have been unwilling to free himself from the presence of a man who was beginning to distinguish himself by an uncompromising independence of spirit. In the celebrated remonstrance which the barons addressed to the

Pope in 1246, and in which they declared that, unless the wrongs of the English Church were redressed, they would raise "a bulwark in defence of the house of the Lord and the liberty of the kingdom," his name stood second among the signatures. He boldly reprimanded the King for his shameless extravagance, and the exactions by which he crippled trade and commerce; and on one occasion he inveighed bitterly against a breach of the chartered rights of the citizens of London.

In October, Simon de Montfort quitted England. On his passage through France he renewed the truce with Louis. Entering Gascony, he addressed himself to the work of pacification with so much vigour that the King of Navarre was compelled to accept an arbitration, and the leader of the revolt, Gaston de Bearn, was defeated, captured, and sent to England, whither the victorious Earl himself returned at Christmas, his arrival "delighting the King and his whole court in no slight degree."¹

In the following February he was again at his post, a difficult one, owing to the universal intrigues of the Gascon nobles. In a letter to the King, he complains of the calumnies they had circulated against him, and of the secret attempts that were being made to supplant him in the royal confidence. Not the less did he seek to perfect the work he had undertaken; and to bridle the mutinous spirit of the Gascons, he erected a chain of forts at the most commanding positions. For this object a grant was made to him, on the 28th of November 1249, of the revenue of Ireland; but a month later, Henry pardoned the arch-rebel, Gaston, and permitted him to return to the scene of his conspiracies.

His successes in the field² being thus grievously undone by the

¹ Matthew Paris, *sub anno* 1249.

² They are thus described by Matthew Paris:—"Through the said Earl

King's council at home, Montfort returned to England in all haste, attended only by three men-at-arms, whose horses were exhausted with hunger and toil. The Gascon nobles, he said, encouraged by the King's foolish lenity, had again risen in arms, and to subdue them effectually he needed money and troops. Not a soldier could he feed or pay, and having exhausted the revenues of his own Earldom, he was compelled to demand assistance from the King, whom he reminded of the many insults the Gascons had offered to himself and his Queen.

"By the head of God," said the King, "thou hast spoken the truth, Sir Earl; and I will not refuse sufficient help to thee, who hast fought so vigorously in my cause. But heavy complaints have been made against thee, that thou dost commit to prison men who come peaceably to thee, and even those whom thou dost thyself invite, as in good faith; and not only dost thou imprison them, but bind them, and put them to death."

It is unnecessary to say that the Earl met these charges with a firm denial, and having temporarily satisfied the King, was sent back to Gascony with troops and money. Here he found the rebellion flourishing, and in the fore front of it the pardoned rebel, Gaston de Bearn. But the Gascons could not make head against his military ability; they were beaten in every

the King took possession of certain castles belonging to Gaston and his accomplices, as those of Fromme and Aigremont, and many others. After his pretended humiliation, Gaston, through the intercession of the Queen, whose kinsman he declared himself to be, was received into such favour with the King that he was restored to his estates, though bound by very strict conditions. The Earl, studying to imitate his father in all respects, and to follow in his footsteps, or even overpass them, so chastised the insolence of the rebels at Bordeaux and throughout all Gascony, that he put to flight, disinherited, and banished, William de Solanis, Rustim, and others, who were raising the heel against the King; and many too he consigned to the gallows."

engagement, and forced to surrender, one after another, their fortified places.

Having once more pacified the mutinous province, Montfort (in 1250) made another short visit to England, leaving the castles in the hands of faithful lieutenants. The Gascons now resorted to different tactics. Relying on the King's well-known weakness of judgment and infirmity of character, and professing that their resistance was directed, not against the monarch, but against his representative, they submitted an almost endless catalogue of accusations against the latter. They represented him as "an infamous traitor, who was secretly amassing immense sums of money, which he extorted from nobles, citizens, and plebeians, on the plea that the King was in need of it, and about to proceed on a pilgrimage;" and by an incessant reiteration of this and other complaints, they succeeded in exciting Henry's suspicions. He secretly despatched his clerk, Henry of Wigham, to Gascony, to search, as Matthew Paris quaintly says, "for a knot on a smooth cane, and an angle in the circumference of a circle;" but his inquiries showed there was no truth in the accusation of the Gascons. Not unnaturally, the proud Earl, when he heard of the proceeding, was deeply angered. "How is it, my lord King," he exclaimed, "that you incline your ear and your heart to the representations of these traitors, and believe men who have formerly been convicted of treachery, rather than your faithful lieutenant?" The King sought to excuse himself by saying, that if the Earl's conduct were loyal and pure, scrutiny would only brighten his fame; apparently unable to see that, by the course he had adopted, he was undermining the authority of his own general, and encouraging the spirit of discontent it was his object to subdue.

The King's inquiries, as we have hinted, brought to light nothing which could discredit the character of the Earl as a

faithful subject and a sagacious statesman. But the Gascons took care to renew their complaints, asserting that the royal commissioner was biassed in favour of the Earl. A second commission was accordingly issued, which reported that the Earl had certainly been severe, but that his severity was fully justified by the condition of the province. In high dudgeon, Montfort again returned to England, at Whitsuntide in the year 1252, and in the King's presence confronted the Gascon delegates,—the Archbishop of Bordeaux and some nobles whose names are not recorded,—disproving their statements so fully and so clearly as to satisfy the assembled barons of his innocence.

It was suspected that Henry would gladly have given another proof of his strange partiality for foreigners by flinging the Earl into the Tower, but the sympathy of the barons was so unequivocally manifested that he durst not carry out his intention. A bitter altercation, however, arose between the King and the subject he had dishonoured. Montfort reminded him of his services, and of the poor return they had met with.

“Make good your words, my lord King!” he exclaimed; “keep your promises to me, and reimburse me in those expenses which I have defrayed, to the imminent ruin of my own Earldom.”

“I do not hold myself pledged,” rejoined the King, “to fulfil my covenant with a false traitor.”

“Traitor!” exclaimed De Montfort; “wert thou not my King, thou shouldst answer at once for so foul a lie! Who can believe thee to be a Christian, or that ever thou goest to confession? Hast thou ever confessed?”

The King answered, “I have.”

“But what avails confession,” said the Earl, “without repentance and atonement?”

“I have not repented of anything so much,” retorted Henry,

“as of suffering you to set foot in England, or to hold land and honour in the realm, wherein you have waxed fat, and kicked against my authority.”¹

It has been rightly remarked, that in this scene the most characteristic faults of both the King and the Earl were brought out into strong relief; the unblushing meanness and half-hearted treachery of the one, and the ungoverned temper and impatience of contradiction of the other. Nothing is plainer throughout Montfort's career—and it is its only blemish—than his restlessness under control, his disdain of any place but the foremost. Let us own, however, that this is the characteristic fault of a strong mind.

A temporary truce was patched up between sovereign and subject, and Henry bade the Earl return to Gascony, where there was work enough to be done. “I go willingly,” said Montfort; “nor, ungrateful as thou art, will I return until I have made the rebels thy footstool.” Before his departure he consulted anxiously with the Countess respecting the education of their children; and having placed them in charge of the admirable Grosseteste, he set forth upon his expedition, “rejoicing in the protection of the Most High,” and attended by the prayers of his loving and noble wife.

The war in Gascony was quickly ended. With indefatigable energy he swept the rebels from town to town,² and castle to castle; and when he had nearly completed his task, had the mortification to become a signal illustration of the ingratitude of kings. His offices were taken from him, and conferred upon Prince Edward. In sore bitterness of spirit he withdrew to

¹ Matthew Paris, *sub anno* 1252.

² On one occasion he ran great risk of his life, being beaten from his horse, and surrounded by the Gascons; but he was saved by a knight whom he had previously rescued by his own personal exertions.—*Matthew Paris, sub anno* 1252.

Paris. While in retirement, he received an offer of the regency of France,—Louis being absent in the Crusades, and the Queen-regent having died in December 1252. A more splendid proof of the esteem in which his genius and integrity were held can hardly be imagined ; but though the offer was twice repeated, he firmly refused it as incompatible with the loyalty he owed to his King,—the King who had insulted and degraded him.

No sooner had Montfort's stern rule been lifted off the necks of the Gascons than they openly defied Henry's authority, and the ill-advised monarch was compelled to repair thither in person, with his knights and men-at-arms, to reduce it to subjection (August 6, 1253). He was, however, as little of a warrior as of a statesman ; and though he captured a few castles, which he straightway bestowed on Peter of Savoy, he made no real progress in the conquest of the province. Montfort, at the instigation of Bishop Grosseteste, hastened to rescue his ungrateful sovereign from a dangerous and disgraceful position. He raised a body of picked men at his own cost, and offered to maintain them at the King's pleasure. He was prompted, says the old chronicler, by the spirit of charity and humility, which passes the bounds of human feelings, to recompense good for evil, and to forget the hasty words of the King, who, in the heat of his anger, had lavished so many insults upon him. Rather he loved to remember the benefits the King had conferred upon him, by giving him his sister in marriage and the Earldom of Leicester.

Henry had the grace to feel the generosity of the Earl's conduct, and he welcomed him with undisguised joy ; while the Gascons, who dreaded him "like the thunder," retired from a struggle in which they could no longer hope to be victorious.

During the next four years Montfort appears but seldom on

the stage of history. He lost in this interval two of his most valued friends, Adam de Marisco, the Franciscan, and Grosse-teste, Bishop of Lincoln; but otherwise his life seems to have flowed on with an unusual tranquillity. We cannot doubt, however, that he was a close observer of the events transpiring around him, and that he had already begun to organise a resistance against the King's tyranny.

Henry's misgovernment, in truth, no less than his rapacity and extravagance, had reached a climax. He had involved himself in the acquisition of the kingdom of Sicily for his younger son Edmund, and, to defray the cost of the expedition to take possession of it, had mortgaged the island to the Pope for 14,000 marks. As soon as the conquest was completed, the Pope demanded payment of the money, under penalty of an excommunication for the King and an interdict for the kingdom. Misfortunes, says an old adage, never come singly; and the country was threatened with a famine, and a league between Scotland and Wales. The great council, summoned to provide the supplies so urgently needed, found themselves confronted by a crisis of the greatest danger. They remonstrated passionately against the royal profusion, and demanded some explanation of the position in which the kingdom was placed. William de Valence, the King's half-brother, endeavoured to fix the blame upon "English traitors." He was challenged to name them. He replied, the Earls of Gloucester and Leicester, the two great leaders of the independent barons. Montfort, burning with a righteous indignation, answered: "Nay, William, I am neither a traitor nor the son of a traitor; our fathers were not alike." And he would have rushed on his insolent accuser, had not the King interposed between them, and partially calmed his passionate spirit.

The dispute between Henry and his council, however, was not so easily settled. Day by day, says the old monk of St

Albans,¹ they multiplied their complaints against the King, accusing him of breaking his most solemn promises, of treating the Church contemptuously, of violating that Great Charter which he had thrice confirmed. They censured him, moreover, for exalting his uterine brothers, as though they had been naturalised in the kingdom, in the most intolerable manner, contrary to all justice and the law of the realm, and exempting them even from the jurisdiction of the Court of Chancery. Of this, we are told, the Earl of Leicester complained bitterly, and not only to the King, but also to the community at large,—a proof that Montfort had wisely studied the signs of the times, and foresaw the future influence of the “middle class.” The King was further reproached with enriching and advancing the interests of foreigners, and with scorning and plundering his own natural subjects. And yet, while his favourites were loaded with wealth, he himself was in such straits that he could not repress the pernicious incursions of the Welsh.

To this long list of misdeeds Henry could answer nothing. He could only acknowledge its accuracy, and, humbling himself before the barons, make oath at St Edward’s shrine that he would fully and properly amend his old errors, and thenceforward prove a generous king to his faithful subjects. But the barons could no longer trust him. At the instigation of De Montfort, they formed a league for the protection of their rights; and they attended the meetings of the council fully armed, as a precaution against treachery.

Once more Henry pledged himself to the observance of the Great Charter. The oath was administered in Westminster Hall on the 2d of May, before all the nobles and prelates of the realm; and every stringent form which honour or religion could devise to make it binding on the conscience was employed. The awful curse was pronounced aloud, “which excommuni-

¹ Matthew Paris, *sub anno* 1258.

cated, anathematised, and cut off from the threshold of Holy Church, all who should, by any act or device, in any manner, secretly or openly, violate, diminish, or change, by word or writing, by deed or advice, either the liberties of the Church, or the liberties and free customs contained in the Great Charter or charter of forests."

The original Charter, with King John's signature, was then unrolled; and to this solemn confirmation of it both the King and prelates and barons impressed their seals, in testimony of the truth to posterity.

While others held a lighted taper during the ceremony, it was remarked that the King put his out of his hand, excusing himself as not being a priest; and it is possible, as Mr Blauuw suggests,¹ that even this frivolous omission may have satisfied his conscience afterwards as to the invalidity of the oath; but he held his hand on his heart all the while. When the torches, amid the ringing of bells, were extinguished, and the universal shout arose, "So may all transgressors be extinguished, and smoke in hell!" he added, with his wonted hypocrisy, or, it may have been, with a temporary self-deception, "So may God help me as I keep this oath, as a man, as a Christian, as a knight, and as an anointed King!"

The parliament, or council, holden at London, was finally adjourned to Oxford, where it assembled on the 11th of June 1258. Each baron, on the pretence that an invasion of the Welsh was to be apprehended, was accompanied by his armed retainers. By this display of force, Henry was coerced into giving his assent to certain provisions called the "Oxford Statutes," and into the appointment of a commission of twenty-four barons and prelates authorised to reform the evils under which the commonwealth laboured. Twelve members were chosen by the nobles, and twelve by the King. Of the latter,

¹ Blauuw's "The Barons' War."

it is significant to note that no fewer than eleven were foreigners. Nevertheless, by right of superior genius, Simon de Montfort became both the head and the arm of this commission; and so surprising were the beneficial changes he and his associates succeeded in carrying out, that it was nicknamed the "Mad Parliament."¹ In order to obtain a sufficient command over the executive, they claimed the appointment of a Chief Justiciar, in whose hands the legal administration of the kingdom centred, and gave the office to Hugh Bigod, a layman, and brother of a powerful noble. Next, they demanded the abolition of fines on the succession of estates; the dismissal of foreigners from all high offices of the state, and from the government of English castles. They also insisted that wealthy heiresses should be married to Englishmen; and, in order to secure a greater control over the royal power, by widening, as we should now-a-days say, the basis of popular representation, they ordered that three sessions of Parliament should be holden annually, and that four knights should be chosen by every county to represent it in the said Parliament. Thus was overthrown the whole fabric of the Norman monarchy, and the rude germs of constitutional government evoked into sudden life.

To these conditions, the King, the barons, and the prelates of England affixed their seals; Henry III. with suspicious eagerness, Prince Edward with open reluctance, and Simon de Montfort with the earnestness of a patriot, pledging himself that he, whatever others might do, would never violate his faith under any pretext. Finally, on the 18th of October 1258, the Oxford Statutes and the Great Charter were solemnly proclaimed in Latin, French, and English,² in every county in England; and thus, for the first time in the history of our

¹ This designation first occurs in the writings of Wyke (temp. Edward I.), who always espouses the royal side.

² "Annals of Burton."

country, it was seen that reform could be accomplished without revolution.¹

The barons, however, found it difficult to insist on the performance of their conditions. Montfort, as an alien by birth,

¹ The King's proclamation * on this occasion is worth quoting. It is given by Rymer and Blauuw :—

“Henry, through God's support, King of England, Lord of Ireland, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and Count of Anjou, sends greeting to all his liegemen, clerical and lay, in . . . shire : That you may all well know that we will grant that whatever our councillors, all or the majority of them, who are chosen by us and by the people of this land in our kingdom, have done or shall do for the honour of God, for our allegiance, and for the good of this land, by the agency of these aforesaid councillors, be steadfast and lasting in all things without end. And we enjoin all our lieges, by the allegiance which they owe to us, that they steadfastly hold, and swear to hold, in this respect to the provisions that are made, or may be made, by these aforesaid councillors, or by the majority of them, as has been also before said ; and that each other person help to do that which others ought to do, and to bear towards them, and that none, either of my land or elsewhere, though this business be hindered or reversed in any way ; and if any man or woman should go against this, we will and command that all our other lieges hold them as most deadly enemies. And because we will that this be steadfast and lasting, we send you this writ open, signed with our seal, to keep amongst your stores.

“Witness ourself at London, the 18th day of the month of October, in the forty-second year of our reign. And this was done before our sworn councillors—

BONIFACE, Archbishop of Canterbury ; WALTER of Cantelupe, Bishop of Worcester ; SIMON of Montfort, Earl of Leicester ; RICHARD of Clare, Earl of Gloucester and Hertford ; ROGER BIGOD, Earl of Norfolk, Marshal of England ; PETER of Savoy ; WILLIAM of Fortois, Earl of Albemarle ; JOHN of Plissley, Earl of Warwick ; JOHN GEOFFREYSON ; PETER of Montfort ; RICHARD of Grey ; ROGER of Mortimer ; JAMES of Aldithel ; and before many others.

“And all and each word is sent into every other shire over all the kingdom of England, and unto Ireland.”

* It is the earliest state paper in English extant.

immediately resigned the two castles which he himself held, and insisted that the foreigners should follow his example. They boldly refused. But the barons had arms in their hands, and were resolved to use them. The Poitevin knights and royal favourites, after a brief struggle, fled to Winchester, whose castle was governed by the alien bishop, Aymer. They were besieged, compelled to surrender, and exiled.

We may pause, for a moment, to look upon the great Earl as now and henceforth the foremost man of the kingdom ; he was held in higher repute than all other persons, whether native or foreign. Hostile biographers have accused him of ambition. We cannot deny the charge ; but when was genius ever without ambition ? As the sparks fly upward, so the bold and active intellect of a great man soars above the commonplace mediocrity of the world. Surely, however, Montfort's was the ambition of a patriot and a statesman—was of that high and exalted character which the poet has described :—

“ The true ambition there alone resides,
Where justice vindicates and wisdom guides ;
Where inward dignity joins outward state,
Our purpose good, as our achievement great ;
Where public blessings public praise attend,
And glory is our motive, not our end.”¹

We shall see, moreover, that if the approval of a people can give a stamp and justification to an heroic ambition, that approval was enjoyed in abundant measure by Simon de Montfort. It was his happy fortune to be at once the champion of his own order, and the protector of the commonalty.

In both characters he was loved, revered, and trusted ; and England long cherished the memory of his triumphs and

¹ Dr Young.

sufferings in the cause of freedom. To the King, on the other hand, his presence seems to have grown intolerably hateful, and that treacherous Prince lost no opportunity of exhibiting his resentment. We are told that Henry, while on one occasion sailing down the river Thames, was overtaken by a storm of thunder and lightning, of which, like Augustus, he was particularly afraid. He was landed at the Bishop of Durham's palace, whose site is now occupied by the stately pile of the Adelphi; and Montfort, who then resided there, came out to bid him welcome with all due homage.

Endeavouring to quiet the King's alarm, the Earl inquired, "What fear you now, my lord, that the storm has passed?"

"I do, indeed, tremble at thunder and lightning," replied the King; "but, by the head of God, I tremble more before you than before the tempests of heaven."

"How unjust, how incredible it seems," answered Montfort, "that you should dread one who has ever loyally served you, your family, and kingdom! Surely it is those who hate and deceive you whom you should chiefly fear."¹

In spite of the royal hatred, Montfort and his fellow-nobles prosecuted their reforms. They announced to the Pope that they did not accept the conditions under which he had granted the crown of Sicily, and they called upon him to redress the ruinous disorders and decay of learning which had been caused by the introduction of so many Italians into English benefices. They concluded peace with France; a beneficial measure, which the womanly vanity of Henry had prevented for twenty years. Their home reforms were equally sweeping. They attempted to correct the grievances under which the country had suffered for the last seven years; they remodelled the office of sheriff, and re-organised the collection of the revenue. Their scheme of work was so comprehensive, so thorough, and so

¹ Matthew Paris.

wise, that it can only have been conceived by the active brain of Montfort ; but not even he was able to carry it out. Much had been done, however ; and much more would have been done, but for the unfortunate discussion which arose between Clare and Montfort, the two most powerful barons. The latter was more thorough than the former, and did not hesitate to rebuke his colleagues for the hesitation they evinced in dealing with some of the national grievances. "What ! my lords," he cried, "after having resolved and sworn, do you still deliberate doubtfully ? and you before all, my Lord of Gloucester, who, as the leader amongst us, are so much the more strictly bound to these wholesome statutes ? I have no pleasure in dealing with men so false and fickle." The delay continuing, Montfort withdrew from the commission, and, biding his time, retired to France (1259).

It has been well observed¹ that, for nearly three years from this date, the history of Montfort is worse than a blank ; it is a riddle so bewildering in the rapidity with which we pass from negotiation to rupture, and from rupture to negotiation again. We shall not attempt, says our authority, to solve it, or to describe the uneasy state—half war, half peace—which long prevailed. One point alone requires to be pressed upon the reader's attention. Not the least valuable of the royal prerogatives, seized by the Oxford commission, because of the hold it gave them on the general government of the country, was the right to nominate the sheriffs. In 1261, the King having procured a Papal bull annulling the Provisions of Oxford, levied an army of mercenaries to give the bull effect, and proceeded to expel the sheriffs who had been placed in office by the barons.

This resumption of authority restored union to the divided councils of the barons. Their reply to it was most memorable.

¹ *Quarterly Review*, No. ccxxxvii., pp. 50, 51.

They summoned three knights elected from each county of England to meet them at St Albans (1261), and discuss the condition of the kingdom. Well may it be said that "the day of the House of Commons could not be far distant when, at such a crisis, an appeal to the knights of the shire could be made," and made, too, with success. For a moment, in carrying out this object, the entire strength of the barons was united, but Henry's intrigues were incessant. Differences soon revived; and against "divided councils" the crown steadily prevailed. The Provisions of Oxford were abrogated; the twenty-four commissioners were "pardoned;" the alien favourites returned to court, and were restored to their castles and honours. The majority of the barons seemed sullenly to acquiesce in this reversal of their policy. Montfort, indignant and disgusted, remained in his voluntary exile, waiting for the opportunity which, we doubt not, his political sagacity foresaw. And Henry, confident in the fulness of his power, found time to pay an amicable visit to his friend and kinsman, Louis IX.

But, on a sudden, the scene was changed. In July 1262, died Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, to whose narrow jealousy the disunion of the barons had been entirely due. Montfort was immediately invited to accept the leadership, and he at once assented, "with a declaration of his equal willingness either to die among bred Christians, fighting for Holy Church, or among pagans as a sworn crusader."¹

In October he returned privately to England, prepared to enter on the great struggle which has made his name famous, and for whose successful conduct he was eminently fitted. For, as the chronicler of Mailros describes him, "He was a man of wonderful forethought and circumspection, pre-eminent in preparing for and vigorously carrying on war; himself a

¹ Chronicle of John of Oxenede (MSS. Cotton. Nero, D. ii.)

perfect soldier, abounding in ingenious stratagems, not degenerate from his high ancestry, and gifted with an almost Divine wisdom." ¹

NOTE.

THE OLD CHRONICLERS.²

Annals of Burton.—These were written in the Burton Monastery, and end abruptly at about 1261.

Chronicle of Lanercost Abbey, Cumberland (Harleian MSS., 2425). This is favourable to the baronial party, and describes the battles of Lewes and Evesham on the authority of an eye-witness.

Chronicle of Lewes, Sussex, favourable to the King. Contains a clear and accurate narrative of the great battle.

Chronicle of Mailros, in Galloway, begins 1235, ends in 1270; favourable to the barons.

Chronicle of John of Oxenede, a Benedictine monk of St Hulmo (down to 1293).

Chronica de primis notis Hybernia et de rebus Britanicis, elev. ad coronationum Edward I. (folio, MSS. Cott. Nero, D. 11). Written by a monk of Rochester.

Epistolæ Adamæ de Marisco, a Franciscan monk; contains many valuable and interesting letters to Queen Eleanor, Simon de Montfort, his Countess, and others.

"*Manners and Household Expenses in England in the Thirteenth Century*," comprising the Roll of the Countess of Leicester's expenses in 1265. Edited by Mr Turner, for the Roxburgh Club, 1841.

Matthew Paris, monk of St Albans, Chronicles of. Matthew Paris died in 1259, but his Chronicle was continued by William Rishanger to 1312.

Matthew of Westminster, flourished about 1375.

"*Miracula Simonis de Monteforti*," printed with the Chronicle of William

¹ Chronicle of the Monks of Mailros (1235-70), quoted by Mr Blauuw, "The Barons' War," p. 84.

² Blauuw's "Barons' War," pp. 2, 3.

of Rishanger, for the Camden Society (supposed to have been written by the monks of Evesham between 1265 and 1278).

Peter Langtoft, French chronicle of. Translated by Robert Mansing, called Robert de Brune (from Bourne, in Lincolnshire).

Robert of Gloucester, Chronicle of. Written in the reigns of Henry III. and Edward I.

Chronicles of Thomas Wyke (to 1290), *Walter Hemingford* (to 1308), *William Kingston*, and *William Thorne*.





CHAPTER II

THE BARONS' WAR.

"The barons ne couthe other red, tho hii hurde this,
Bote bidde Godes grace, and bataile abide iwis."

—*Robert of Gloucester*.¹

"Haec Angli de proelio legite Lewensi,
Cujus patrocinio vivitis defensi,
Quia si victoria jam victis cessisset,
Anglorum memoria victa viluisset."

—*Political Songs of the Thirteenth Century*.²

MONTFORT employed the winter of 1262-3 in preparing for the great struggle which he foresaw, and reorganising the party he had been called upon to lead. His personal ascendancy—that singular power of influencing all with whom he came into contact, which was also possessed by Cromwell and Napoleon—soon dispelled all differences, and brought into subjection the more mutinous and aggressive spirits. He contrived to inspire his followers with something of the enthusiasm which animated himself, and

¹ When they heard this, the barons could resolve on nothing else but to pray for God's grace, and abide the battle.

² "Read, Englishmen, of Lewes' fray,
Through which your freedom now ye claim ;
For, had the conquered won the day,
Disgraced had been your country's fame."

taught them to feel and comprehend that the object of their contention was England for the English. The popular instinct, which is seldom wrong, detected the truth and nobleness of his aims; and many a song and ballad, handed down to our own time, record the praises of the heroic leader, and unmistakably prove that he carried with him the sympathies of the great body of the people. They rejoiced in the heavy blows he dealt the alien bishops and nobles. As when he seized Peter, the foreign Bishop of Hereford, in his own cathedral:—

“The Bishop of Hereford knew full well
That the Earl, if he pleased, could make his blows tell,
When he took the matter in hand.
Greedy and proud was the alien before,
He could eat all the English and crave for more,
But now he is at his wits’ end.”¹

Or when Simon de Waltone, Bishop of Norwich, was compelled to take sanctuary in Bury St Edmunds:—

“The shepherd of the Norwich fold,
Who fleeces and preys on his sheep,
Of Leicester’s power need not be told;
His goods from less he could not keep.
No thanks to him who left him aught,
For shame by shame is fitly bought.”

The Earl is described as “faithfully sweating in the cause, and zealous for justice.” His partisans were in every town and village. As Mr Blauuw reminds us, a general persecution was carried on against all who could not speak English, the people joining in it so eagerly, that many foreigners, both laymen and clerical, fled the country in alarm, and the stewards of the alien clergy were forbidden to pay them any rents or render them any account, on pain of their lands being laid waste.

• Translated by Blauuw in “The Barons’ War.”

The first actual hostilities took place in May 1263, on the Welsh border, when the barons' army, led by Leicester, imprisoned the foreign Bishop of Hereford, drove out the alien sheriffs, stormed and captured the royal castles, and swept with fire and sword through all the lands possessed by foreigners. And as they moved along, their ranks were daily swollen by fresh accessions from the great body of the people. Strong in the general confidence, Montfort despatched Roger de Clifford to the King, demanding his observance of the Oxford Statutes, and the appointment of native governors to the castles. Henry's position was so critical that he had no help but to comply; and on the 27th of June, he sent the Bishops of London, Worcester, Lincoln, and Coventry, with the deed of agreement to the Chancellor, with injunctions that he should revise it with all speed, in order that the King and Prince might escape from a great and imminent danger.

A truce at once took place, and Dover Castle was surrendered to the barons as a guarantee of its continuance (July 26).

But, the blow averted for the moment, Henry made haste to France, where he concerted with Louis the measures calculated to relieve him from thralldom to his powerful subject. Returning with a body of French mercenaries, he marched straight upon Montfort, who, with diminished forces, lay encamped in Southwark. The gates of the city having been closed, and their keys flung into the Thames by some of the royal partisans, he would have succeeded in surprising the great Earl, had not the Londoners, ever zealous in his cause, burst open the barriers of the bridge, and enabled him to cross the river in safety. With his usual generosity, Montfort rescued the four traitors from the summary vengeance of the people, but a heavy fine was exacted from them to defray the cost of strengthening the chains and defences of the city, and they afterwards perished at Lewes.

At this epoch both the King and the barons, under what influence we know not, were induced to refer their differences to the arbitration of Louis of France. Henry and several of his adherents repaired to Amiens for this purpose, and Montfort appears to have intended being present ; but on his way towards Dover his horse fell, and, his thigh-bone being broken, he was compelled to return to Kenilworth. It is not probable, however, that his presence would have had any influence on Louis, who, with the prejudices of an absolute king, naturally decided in favour of a brother despot. His award, delivered on the 22d of January 1264, declared, that "considering the Oxford Statutes, and the results that had flowed from them,—that much had been done against the right and honour of the King, to the disturbance of the kingdom, the depression and plunder of the churches, with grievous injury to aliens and natives, both clerical and lay, and that probably worse things might happen hereafter,—we, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, annul and declare void the Oxford Statutes, and all regulations depending on them, so far as the Pope has already annulled them."

With such a decision, though it was the one naturally to be expected from a prince of the arbitrary tendencies of Louis IX., it was impossible for the barons to be contented. That the King should appoint his own officers, summon his Parliament only when he pleased, and appoint alien governors to his castles, was to return to the old bad and bitter way of government. They had gained nothing ; they had lost everything. No wonder that the barons were astounded. They had been represented at Amiens by men of inferior weight ; and the document they had incautiously signed, entrusting Louis with the arbitration, did undoubtedly give him full power to decide upon every question connected with the Oxford Statutes. But when they received the award, they declared unanimously that

the question of the employment of aliens was never meant to be, and never should be, included. On previous occasions, some imperfect attempts had been made at arbitration, to which we have not thought it necessary to refer. It has been justly remarked that, at one time or another, almost every question which had disturbed the peace of the kingdom had been referred to some neutral judgment. The exclusion of aliens, however, had always been regarded as a fundamental principle. The barons had never at any time submitted it to arbitration; they had not intended to include it in the reference to King Louis. On all other points they would bow, however reluctantly, to his decision; but they were inflexible in their determination to recover England for the English.

Some of the party, however, were won over by the royal promises and bribes—Prince Henry, son of the King of the Romans, John de Vaux, Hans l'Estrange, Roger de Clifford, and Roger de Leybourne. "Let them go," said Simon de Montfort;¹ "yet with my four sons will I stand true to the just cause, which I have sworn to uphold, for the honour of the Church and the benefit of the kingdom. In many lands and provinces of divers nations, both Pagan and Christian, have I been, but in none have I found such faithlessness and deception as in England." Prince Henry offered to surrender his arms, and to swear that he would never appear in battle against his uncle. "Go your way, my lord Henry," was the scornful reply; "and take your arms with you, for I do not fear them. It is not for them I care, but for your base lack of loyalty." The defection, however, cannot have been very considerable, and was more than counterbalanced by the adhesion of the English clergy, who regarded Montfort as their champion, and of the burghers and freemen of the great commercial towns.

¹ William Rishanger, *De Bello Lewesensi*.

Another attempt was made to avoid the arbitrament of arms. In March 1264 the envoys of the barons met the Bishop of Lichfield and the Archdeacon of Norwich at Brackley, near Oxford, with the offer of submitting to all the other articles of the award, excepting that which allowed the King to continue his patronage of foreigners. But the award had never been popular with the citizens of London, and these, on the 31st of March, rose in violent insurrection against the royal cause. When the King heard of the outbreak, he waxed wroth, and dismissed the prelates with a caution not to return and talk of peace until he sent for them.

War then began. Montfort appointed his rendezvous at Northampton; but before his barons and knights could assemble, Prince Edward with a body of royalists hastily marched upon that city, and carried it by assault. The Earl's son, young Simon de Montfort, led the defence with unsuccessful courage, and was taken prisoner. The news of these misfortunes were conveyed to the great Earl at St Albans, but he refused to be discouraged. "Before the month of May is out," he exclaimed, "all the gladness of my enemies shall be turned to confusion." "Raging like a lion despoiled of his whelps," he determined on striking a heavy blow in another quarter. Moving towards London, he proceeded through Surrey and Kent, to lay siege to Rochester. But the advance of the royalists compelled him to raise his blockade of the castle, and fall back upon London, where the citizens flocked to his banner in great numbers.¹ Prince Edward meanwhile marched upon Tunbridge, and struck in through the wooded defiles of Sussex to the sea-coast, marking his progress by "plunder, fire, and slaughter." Finding the Cinque Ports faithful to the barons' party, Henry and his son turned away from their neighbourhood, and on Sunday, May 11, 1264, arrived under the walls

¹ He was joined by as many as 15,000. Robert de Brune says 60,000.

of Lewes, then in possession of their devoted partisan, the Earl of Warrenne.

Meanwhile De Montfort, with his army largely reinforced, began his march southward on the 6th of May, and conducted it with so much skill and success, that he arrived at Fletching, nine miles from Lewes, on the 12th, and pitched his camp in the shadow of its woods.

But before finally appealing to arms, the Earl, with his usual moderation, made another attempt to arrange terms of peace. He selected as his envoys two illustrious prelates, Walter de Cantelupe, Bishop of Worcester, and Richard de Sandwich, Bishop of London. They were instructed to offer a sum of 50,000 marks (£33,333, 6s. 8d.), in compensation for damages done by the baronial troops, if the King would solemnly promise to carry out the Provisions of Oxford. They also bore the following letter :—

“To their most excellent lord, Henry, by the grace of God the illustrious King of England, Lord of Ireland, Duke of Aquitaine, the Barons and others his lieges, wishing to observe their oath and faith to God and him, send health and due service with honour and reverence.

“Since it is apparent by many proofs that certain persons among those who surround you have uttered many falsehoods against us to your Lordship, devising all the evil in their power, not only towards us, but towards yourself, and the whole kingdom :

“May your Excellency know, that as we wish to preserve the health and safety of your person with all our might, and with the fidelity due to you, proposing only to resist by all means in our power those persons who are not only our enemies, but yours, and those of the whole kingdom :

“May it please you not to believe their falsehoods :

“We shall always be found your liegemen ; and we, the Earl of Leicester and Gilbert de Clare,¹ at the request of others, have affixed our seals for ourselves.

“Given in the Weald, near Lewes, on the first Tuesday after the Feast of St Pancras” (May 13, 1264).

¹ The young, powerful, and wealthy Earl of Gloucester.

Hume terms this address "submissive in the language, but exorbitant in the demands." The demands, however, were fully justified by the condition of the country, and were nothing more than at one time the King had solemnly promised to concede.

The errand of the ambassadors was fruitless. Henry relied on his large army,¹ and, inspired by a deep personal antipathy to his great brother-in-law, he rejected the petition of the barons with undisguised scorn. Prince Edward did but express his father's feelings when he exclaimed—"They shall have no peace whatever, unless they put halters round their necks, and give themselves up for us to hang them or cut them down as we please."

When they heard such undignified railing, the two bishops could do nought else, as the old chronicler quaintly says, than pray for the grace of God ; and returning to the barons' camp, they made known the ill success of their mission, which probably no one had expected to turn out otherwise.

Then both sides made ready for the battle.

Lewes, in the year of our Lord 1286, formed an irregular group of narrow streets and timbered houses, lying in the centre of an extensive plain watered by the Ouse, and at the foot of an abrupt eminence which was crowned by an impregnable fortress. A massive wall, pierced by four machicolated gateways, and defended by a deep ditch, enclosed the town. To the south, on an insulated knoll, rose the stately Priory of St Pancras, the headquarters of the King ; Prince Edward and his suite had taken up their residence in Earl Warrenne's castle. To the north of the town, as far as Fletching, where the barons were encamped, stretched a dense luxuriant forest, peopled by herds of deer and swine ; and beyond extended a long range of chalk hills, occasionally relieved by a *coombe*, or shallow valley. A more formidable range ran westward, from

¹ Chronicles of Thomas Wyke.

Mount Caburn to Mount Harry (to adopt their modern appellations), and thence to the borders of pleasant Hampshire.

As striking a contrast prevailed between the two camps which lay pitched on the downs of Lewes, as between those of the English King and the Norman Duke on the eve before the great fight at Senlac. The Bishop of Worcester passed through the kneeling ranks of the barons' army, confessed and absolved the knight, man-at-arms, and common soldier, promising admission into heaven for all who fell fighting in the sacred cause of justice. Foremost in each devout exercise was the great Earl himself, for such was his custom, and no man more strictly attended to his religious duties; and, at the conclusion, he and his partisans all donned a white cross upon their dress, partly as a sign that they went into battle under the sanction of Heaven, and partly as a token by which they might recognise one another.

Throughout the night the Priory of St Pancras echoed with the sound of revelry instead of the voice of prayer, and the King and his courtiers made merry with song and dance, with lewd women and the full wine-cup.¹ And we are told that neither the precincts of the conventual church, nor even its very altars, were free from the pollution of their shameless vices.

De Montfort, having bestowed knighthood on many of the young nobles of the barons' army—

“ Hii hoveðe under boskes, and new knightes made,
And armèd and attirèd them, and ther bedes gernè bade; ”²

Beneath the woods they hovered, and new knights freely made,
And armed them and equipped them, and prayer devoutly said ;

¹ “ Pars vero adversa negligentius agens noctem illam coreis et cantilenis occupans, potationibus et scortationibus insistebat, adeo ut cœnobio solemnium S. Pancratii Martyris non parcerent, quia coram altaribus sacris obscœna cum meretricibus cubilia fecerunt.”—*Chronicle of Lanercost*.

² Robert of Gloucester, ed. Hearne, ii.

arranged his small but compact force in military order, and at early dawn, on the morning of Wednesday, May 26, began to descend upon Lewes.

“ Sir Simond de Mountford conseilede hom vaste,¹
 Hou hii ssolde hom conteini, the wule the bataile ilaste.
 Tho com the ost smite out, vaste out of the tounne,²
 Mani was the gode bodi, that ther was ibroz³ ther doune.
 Vor the Lond reis ther biuore a gret despit wrozte⁴
 To the Quene at Londone, Sir Edward ther on thouzte,⁵
 &, vor to awreke is moder,⁶ to hom⁷ vaste he drou,
 & brouzte hom to grounde, & some of hom al flemde he slou.⁸
 Tho⁹ he adde this Loundreis al ibrouzte to grounde,
 With gret joye he turnde azen, ac lute¹⁰ joye he founde.
 Vor the barons were aboue, & is half ouer come.
 The King of Alemaine was in a windmulle inome.¹¹
 Vor a zong knizt him nom, knizt ymad the rizt,¹²
 Sir John de Bess icluped, that was suith god knizt,¹³
 That muche prowessse dude a dai. & the king him zeld¹⁴ in doute
 To the Erl of Gloucetre, as to the hexte¹⁵ of the route.
 & to the frere menors¹⁶ in to toun Sir Edward fleu vaste,
 & there, as he nede moste, zeld¹⁷ him atte laste.
 Mani on stilleliche¹⁸ hor armes a wei caste,
 & chaungede hom vor herigaus,¹⁹ somdel hii were agaste,
 & mani flowe in to the water, & some toward the see,
 & manie passede ouer, & ne come neuere aze.²⁰
 About a four thousand & fif hundred me sede
 Atte bataile were aslawe,²¹ that was a pitos dede.”²²

Such is the concise account of the famous battle given by

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Family. | 2 When the host rushed quickly out of the town. |
| 3 Brought. | 4 For the Londoners had before a great insult wrought. |
| 5 Of this Sir Edward bethought himself. | 6 And to avenge his mother. |
| 7 Upon them. | 8 He killed in their flight. |
| 9 When. | |
| 10 Little. | 11 Taken. |
| 12 A knight rightly made. | |
| 13 A very good knight. | 14 Yielded. |
| 15 The chief or highest. | |
| 16 The monastery. | 17 Surrendered. |
| 18 Privately, secretly. | |
| 19 And drove home their spurs. | 20 Again. |
| 21 Slain. | 22 Robert of Gloucester, ed. Hearne, ii. 547, 548. |

the ancient chronicler ; our own narrative must be fuller in its details.

The progress of the baronial army was considerably impeded by the denseness of the wood through which it had to thread its way ; but owing to the fulness of the orders issued by Montfort to each of his bannerets, the various parts of the bold and difficult movement were combined with the most admirable regularity. But that no tidings of the march was conveyed to the King, who might assuredly have attacked his antagonist at a great advantage, is a proof that the sympathies of the common people were with Montfort and his cause.

Through the rich woodlands of Newick they continued their descent, with banners shining and lances glittering ; wound through the hollow valley of the Combe, and again ascending, soon reached the summit of the chalk-ridge that extends to the west of Lewes. Here they found and captured a solitary sentinel, who, far in advance of the royal camp, and unsupported by any comrades, had abandoned himself to a sound sleep. Rudely awakened, he was compelled, under pain of death, to furnish Montfort with all the information he required respecting the royal forces.¹ With silent and steady ranks, the barons kept their way along the west of the Downs, and intercepted a foraging party sent out by the King for fresh supplies of hay and corn. Several were killed, but a few escaped, and conveyed to the leaders of the royal army their first intelligence of the enemy's approach.

In due time the barons approached the declivity which slopes towards Lewes, and caught sight of the grey belfry of the Priory. Montfort then dismounted from his horse, and taking his stand in the centre of his little army, he addressed them in stirring words :—

“O my beloved comrades and followers ! we are about this

¹ Chronicle of Oxenede.

day to engage in battle for the sake of the right government of our country,—in honour of God, the blessed Mary, all the saints, and our holy mother Church,—no less than for the due observance of our faith. Let us pray to the Lord of all that, if our present undertaking find favour in His eyes, He will endow us with strength and vigour to show a grateful service by our knightly belt, and vanquish the malice of our foes. And as we are His, to Him let us commend ourselves, body and soul." And immediately those stern warriors flung themselves prostrate on the earth, and, with their extended arms imitating the form of a cross, they cried aloud, "Grant us, O Lord of hosts, our desire, and a glorious victory, to the honour of Thy holy name."¹

The Earl then proceeded to array his forces. The declivity on which he had halted divides itself into three projections or spurs, each advancing towards Lewes, and each bounded by a considerable defile. On the northern spur, which faces towards the castle, he posted the Londoners, under Nicholas de Segrave, an old and experienced soldier. In the centre stood the main body of the army, under the young Earl of Gloucester, assisted by John Fitz-John and William de Monchesney. The right wing, on the southern declivity, was commanded by Henry, the eldest, and Guy, the third son of De Montfort. The reserve was led by the Earl in person. As it was known that the royalists would set a high importance on his capture or death, a singular stratagem was devised to mislead them in their attacks. The Earl had some months previously met with an accident to his leg, which had entailed a slight weakness, and necessitated the employment of a car or litter, specially constructed for him in London. As this circumstance was well known to the royalists, the car, in which some Londoners who had espoused the royal cause were

¹ Chronicle of Oxenede.

straitly confined, was stationed, with the baggage, on a conspicuous point of the hill, surrounded by the Earl's own banners and pennons, and defended by a guard under young William le Blunde.

The scene, at this moment, says Blauuw, must have been an animating one, when the barons, each under his own banner, were preparing themselves and their horses, on the broad expanse of the Downs, for the approaching combat. We may realise it, perhaps, in our imagination, with the help of the stirring lines of an old poet :—

“*La ont meinte riche garnement,
Brodè sur coudeaus et samis,
Meint beau penon en lance mis,
Meint banière desploiè ;
E loing estoit la noise sie
Des hennisement des chevaux ;
Par tote estoient mouns et vauls
Pleins de summers e de charrir,
Que la vitaille e la courrir,
De hutes et de pavillons.*”¹

For the convenience of our young readers, we subjoin Mr Blauuw's translation :—

“*Rich caparisons were there,
Silks and satins broidered fair ;
On lances fixed gay pennons see,
Many a banner flowing free ;
To distant ears his eager cry
The neighing war-horse sends on high ;
On every hill and vale around
The sumpter beasts and carts abound ;
Arms, forage, victuals, scattered lay,
With huts and tents in close array.*”

Among the leading nobles who fought under Montfort's leadership, but to whom no particular charge in the field was

¹ Chronicle of the Siege of Caerlaverock, cit. by Blauuw.

assigned, we read the names of Hugh le Despenser, formerly Justiciary of England; Robert de Ferrers, last Earl of Derby of that name; Robert de Vipont; Robert de Ros; John de Visci; John Gifford—

“ Sire John Gifford deit bien nomé ;
E si fu tous fois a devant
Prus e sages e valiant
E de grant renomée.”

One name renowned must needs be told,
John Gifford, prudent, sage, and bold ;¹

Robert and William Marmion; Ralph Basset; Henry Hussey; Jerdun de Sackville; and Robert de Tregoy.² It is no exaggeration to say that the best and bravest of the chivalry of England were this day gathered on the field of Lewes in defence of what was assuredly the popular cause.

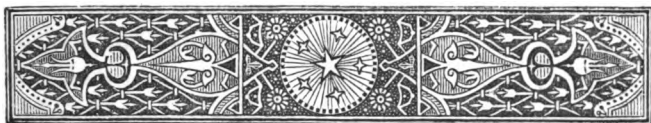
“ Mont furent bons les Barons,
Mès touz ne sui nomer lur noms,
Tant est grant la some.”

Many and good were the Barons bold,
But the names of all cannot be told,
So great was their array.

¹ Political Songs of the Thirteenth Century.

² All that is known of these great nobles will be found recorded in Mr Blauuw's "Barons' War" (ed. 1844), pp. 156-164.





CHAPTER III.

THE BATTLE OF LEWES, MAY 14, 1264.

“The trumpets blew, and then did either side
Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly move,
Meet in the midst, and there so furiously
Shock, that a man far off might well perceive
The hard earth shake, and a low thunder of arms.”

—TENNYSON.

AT the approach of the barons, the royal army poured out of the castle and city of Lewes, and hastened to array themselves for the inevitable struggle.

Prince Edward, with the eye of a true soldier, detected the weakest point of Montfort's line, and posted himself on the right, opposite the Londoners, the flower of the royal forces (“*flos exercitus*”) being under his command, young knights and veterans, heavily armed and well-mounted, against whose tremendous onslaught the eager but undisciplined citizens could offer, as he foresaw, no effectual resistance.

The centre was led by King Henry, who had all the courage of a Plantagenet, though he was utterly destitute of military ability. His great nobles formed a body-guard around him; and as his standard of the dragon shook out its silken folds into the air, he grew elate with the anticipation of victory, and shouted aloud, “Simon, I defy you!”

“ Ther the bataile suld be, to Leaus thai gan them alie,
 The Kyng and his meyne were in the Pryorie ;
 Symon cam to the field, and put up his banere,
 The Kyng schewd forth his scheld, his dragon full austere ;
 The Kyng said on hie, *Symon, je vous defie.*”¹

The royalists having ascended the rising ground before them,—a mighty host, some 60,000 strong,—Prince Edward, anxious to avenge upon the Londoners the insult they had offered to his mother—“thirsting after their blood,” it is said, “as the hart pants for cooling streams,”—swept upon them with the crash of a whirlwind, and by the sheer strength of his onset, threw their ranks into confusion, and compelled them to give way. Their leaders vainly attempted to arrest the retreating tide. Before these heavily-armed horsemen the citizens bent like reeds before a hurricane ; and the front ranks falling back upon the rear, the whole of the right wing of the barons was flung into irretrievable disorder.

The impetuous spirit of Prince Edward was not satisfied with this success. He continued the pursuit towards the west for upwards of four miles, plying his sword with unfailing energy. This headlong ride, like that of Prince Rupert’s at Marston Moor, brought him in sight of the baggage of the enemy, and of the car which bore the great Earl’s banner. Supposing the prize of victory to be immediately within his grasp, he fell upon the car, slaying its gallant defender, William le Blund, and shouting, in a very frenzy of hate, “Come forth, come forth, Simon, thou devil ; come out of the car, thou worst of traitors !”² But no Simon answered to his reproaches, and

¹ Robert de Brune. We learn from another source that the dragon was made “in the manner of a standard or ensign, of red samite, embroidered with gold, his tongue, as it were, continually moving, and his eyes of sapphire.” When borne with the army, it was “the sign of death and mighty revenge.”

² Chronicle of the Monks of Mailros, cit. Blauuw, p. 173.

in the *mêlée* which ensued, the unfortunate London merchants were slaughtered, whose devotion to the King's cause was thus cruelly rewarded.

Meantime, while the impetuosity of Edward carried him so far from the scene of conflict, the King of the Romans, who had advanced against the barons' centre, met with a resistance so firm and unyielding, that, in spite of all his efforts, his men gave way in confusion. The royal centre was thus exposed on the left, and Montfort immediately saw that a general charge against this part of the King's army would probably place the victory in his hands. Prince Edward was far in his rear; the royal left was disordered and dispirited. Accordingly, the Earl brought up his reserve to strengthen his right wing, and pouring down upon the royal left, so as to complete their discomfiture, and sweep them from the field, he fell with irresistible force on the exposed centre. Henry fought bravely. He received several severe wounds, and his horse was killed under him. His soldiers, animated by his example, resisted to the last, but it was impossible to withstand successfully the "lightning valour" of the barons; and, terribly reduced in numbers, they retreated into the Priory, carrying with them their sovereign.

"Oh, miserable sight!" exclaims the chronicler,¹ "when the son seeks to overpower the father, and the father to vanquish the son; kinsman fighting against kinsman, and fellow-citizen against fellow-citizen, with their swords brandished on either side, drunk with the blood of the slain, felling, maiming, and trampling their foes under the horses' feet, or binding their prisoners in the cruellest bonds."

It seems to have been a subject of peculiar gratification to the barons that the royalists, who had disgraced themselves by many sacrilegious outrages, should now, in their extremity, be

¹ William Rishanger, *De Bello Lewesensi*.

forced to take refuge in a church. A contemporary balladist enlarges on this point with much unction. To the mother, he says, whom they ought to have honoured, but had previously profaned, they now fled for an asylum :—

“In ecclesia
Unicum refugium restabat, relictis
Equis, hoc consilium occurrebat victis ;
Et quam non timuerant prius prophanare,
Quam more debuerant matris honorare
Ad ipsam refugiunt, licet minus digni.”¹

After the repulse of the left wing, the King of the Romans, closely pursued by the baronial troops, had flung himself into a windmill, which stood on the summit of the Down. There, says Blauuw, he was for some time exposed to the rude jests and reproaches of those with whom he had so often and so recently been leagued. “Come out, you bad miller,” they shouted ; “you, forsooth, to turn a wretch mill-master—you who defied us all so proudly, and would have no meaner title than King of the Romans, and always Augustus.” The latter designation, though an invariable affix to the German dignity, seemed peculiarly strange and ludicrous to English ears. The ballad-makers of the time long loved to sing of the King’s discomfiture. A favourite song runs as follows :—

“The Kyng of Alemaigne wende do ful wel,
He saisede the mulne for a castel,
With bare sharpe swordes he ground the stel,
He wende that the sayles were mangonel”²
To help Windèsore.
Richard, that thou be ever *trickard*,
Tricken shalt thou never more.

¹ “Political Songs,” Harleian MSS., 973, v. 36.

² A military engine employed to hurl heavy stones against the walls of a fortress.

“ The Kyng of Alemaigne gederede ys host,
 Makede him a castel of a mulne post,
 Wende with is prude and is muchele bost,
 Brohte from Alemaigne mony sori gost
 To store Windesore.
Richard, that thou be ever *trickard*,
Tricken shalt thou never more.”

IMITATED.

The King of the Romans thought he did well,
 When he seized on a mill for a proud castèl,
 And with sharpest swords upon it fell ;
 He thought that its sails were a mangonel
 To help Windèsore !
 As a trickard, my Richard, thou bearest the bell,
 But ne'er to trick us any more.

Our King did reckon without his host,
 When a castle he saw in a windmill post ;
 He who had brought with blatant boast
 A troop of friends from the Alemayne coast
 To people Windèsore.
 A trickard, my Richard, thou art at the worst,
 But ne'er to trick us any more !

As evening came on, and no opportunity of escape presented itself, the Prince and his son, Edmund, were compelled to surrender, to the infinite delight of the baronial party.

It was about eight o'clock, says the chronicler, before Prince Edward returned from his ill-advised pursuit of the Londoners—returned to find the battle lost, and the field in the possession of the barons. He accordingly endeavoured to effect the circuit of the town, under cover of its artillery, and to gain the castle, which was still occupied by De Warrenne.

But, panic-struck and dispirited, not fewer than three or four hundred of his most powerful adherents resolved to effect their escape under cover of the friendly night, and riding southward,

they gained the sea-shore, and contrived to obtain a passage to France.

The escape of these knights and nobles, as forming the nucleus of a new royal party, was a source of much annoyance to Simon de Montfort. A contemporary balladist very graphically describes the great leader's vexation :—

“ By Gode that is aboven us, he dude muche synne
That lette passen over see the Erl of Warynne ;
He hath robbed Engeland, the moors ant the fennes,
The goldt ant the selver, ant ye boren henne,¹
For love of Wyndesore.

“ Sir Simond de Mountfort hath swore bi ys chin,
Havede² he now here the Erl of Warynne,
Shulde he never more come to his yn,³
Ne⁴ with shield, ne with spere, ne with other gyn,⁵
To help of Wyndesore.

“ Sir Simond de Mountfort hath swore by his cop,⁶
Havede he now here Sir Hue le Bigot,
Al⁷ he shulde quite⁸ here a twelf-moneth scot,
Shulde he never more with his fot pot⁹
To help Wyndesore.”¹⁰

Meanwhile the retreating royalists, pursued by the triumphant confederates, broke into Lewes, which was full of the dead and dying, of the wounded looking in vain for shelter, of all the horrors and excesses of war. The darkness of the night was soon illuminated by the flames of burning houses, ignited by “spryngelles of fire,”¹¹ which the castle garrison hurled from their mortars into the town. Prince Edward made an effort to re-form his disordered ranks, when Simon de Montfort, not

¹ And borne them away. ² Had. ³ Inn or mansion. ⁴ Nor.

⁵ Military engine. ⁶ Head. ⁷ Although. ⁸ Pay a twelvemonth's fine.

⁹ He should never more trudge with his foot.

¹⁰ “Political Songs,” from MS. Harl., 978, quoted by Blauuw.

¹¹ Pellets of tow dipped in Greek fire.—*Blauuw*.

less humane than brave, proposed a temporary truce, with the view of entering into negotiations on the morrow. His proposition was accepted, and the carnage, which had lasted far into the night, was terminated. The chroniclers differently estimate the number of the slain from 3000 to 20,000 ; but the most accurate authorities place it at 5000.

“ Many fair ladies lost their lords that day,
Many stout knights at Lewes slaughtered lay ;
The number ne’er was told by man to man,
’Tis only known to Him who all things can.”

“ Contrary to all expectation,” says William Rishanger, “ the barons had thus gained a wonderful victory, which they attributed with gratitude to Him alone by whose support they had passed through the mortal dangers of the struggle.” The same spirit of devotional joy, observes Mr Blauuw, and affectionate gratitude to the achievers of such a victory, pervades other contemporary accounts. Among the most remarkable is a long Latin rhymed poem, composed immediately after the battle, by one who, amidst much calm and moderate reasoning on the relations of regal power and civil liberty, manifests his feelings of exultation and thankfulness by such outbursts as the following :—

“ May the Lord bless Simon de Montfort, his sons, and his comrades, who have so nobly and so boldly fought in compassion for the sad fate of the English, when they were so cruelly trampled under foot, and nearly deprived of all their liberties, and even of life, languishing under the despotic Prince. . . .

“ Blessed be the Lord God of Vengeance, who sits on His high throne in heaven, and by His own might treads upon the necks of the proud, making the great subject to the weak. He has subdued two kings and their two heirs into captivity, as transgressors of the laws, and has abandoned to ignominy all the pride of their warfare, with their numberless followers.”

A later chronicler, quaint old Grafton, furnishes a brief but striking summary of the battle :—

“Upon Wednesday,” he says, “early in the morning, both the hostes met, where, after the Londoners had given the first assault, they were beaten back, so that they began to draw from the sharpe shot and strokes, to the discomfiture of the barons’ hoste. But the barons encouraged and comforted their men in such wise, that not onely all the freshe and lustye knights fought eagerly, but also such as before were discomfited gathered a newe courage unto them, and fought without feare, insomuch that the King’s vaward lost their places. Then was the field covered with dead bodies, and gasping and groaning was heard on every syde; for eyther of them was desyrous to bring others out of lyfe. And the father spared not the sonne, neyther yet the sonne spared the father! Alliaunce at that time was toured to defiaunce, and Christian blood was shed that day without pitie! Lastly, the victory fell to the barons; so that there was taken the King, and the King of Romaines, Sir Edward the King’s sonne, with many other noblemen, to the number of fifteen barons and bannerets, and of the common people that were slain about 20,000. For their safe keeping the prisoners were sent unto dyverse castellis and prisons, except the King, his brother the King of Almayne (King of the Romans), and Sir Edward his sonne, the which the barons helde with them untill they came to London.”

There was much of wise policy, concludes Mr Blauuw,¹ as well as forbearance, in De Montfort’s suspension of hostilities, proposed at the very moment when his sovereign lay a defenceless prey before him. As a mere soldier, he might have pushed the issue to a violent extremity, but as a statesman, his arm was arrested. Had the Priory, which the opinions of the age and the authority of a jealous Church invested with the

¹ Blauuws’ “Barons’ War,” pp. 190, 191.

privileges of sanctuary, been taken by storm that night, the horrors that might have ensued, the violence to the King's person, perhaps even his death, would have deeply perilled the cause of constitutional liberty. The inherent attachment to monarchy, which has ever distinguished the English character; that loyalty, which has been truly described as "scarcely less refining and elevating, in a moral point of view than patriotism, and exciting as disinterested energies,"¹ would have been outraged by so undisguised a collision. To obviate such feelings, the constitutional fiction, since so often and so well employed, of casting blame and responsibility on others rather than the King, had, even in those early times, been found expedient, and had throughout been put forward to justify the barons. While their war was directed against his bad advisers, they appeared to respect "the divinity that doth hedge a king," and were still able to vaunt themselves as his true liegemen. To carry on this convenient fiction was obviously the most politic course, and accordingly all the subsequent arrangements were founded on this basis, the appearance of free agency being studiously preserved to the King.

The victory of Lewes was succeeded by what is historically known as the "Mise of Lewes," an agreement concluded between two ecclesiastics on the part of the barons, and two Cluniac monks on the part of the King.

By this Mise, or agreement, it was stipulated that "the King and his adherents on the one side, and the Earls of Leicester and Gloucester, with their 'accomplices,' on the other side, should procure two Frenchmen, to be chosen in the presence of the illustrious King of France, by means of three prelates and three nobles of France, to be named and summoned by the said King; and that the two, when chosen, should come to England, and associate with themselves a third person,

¹ Hallam's "Middle Ages."

belonging to England, whom they should select ; and whatever the said three should determine, both as to what the King should confirm or annul, and also as to all controversies which had arisen between the parties concerning the government of England, should remain thereby fixed and ratified by the corporal oath of the parties, according to a deed drawn up on the subject, certified by the seals of the King and of the foresaid parties ; and that Prince Edward and Prince Henry, the first-born sons of the King and of the King of the Romans, should be given up as hostages for the fulfilment of the above, on the part of the King."

These hostages were surrendered on Friday, May the 16th, and Prince Edward was immediately removed to Dover, in the custody of Henry de Montfort, who treated him with the courtesy due to his sovereign's son.

NOTE.

THE BATTLE OF LEWES.

(*From Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle.*)

At Lewes the King bigan mid is poer a bide.¹
 The barons astunte² withoute toun biside,
 & vaire sende in to the toun to the King hor sonde,³
 That he ssolde, vor Gode's loue, him bet vnderstonde,
 & graunte hom the gode lawes, & habbe pite of is lond,
 & hii him wolde serue wel, to vote & to hond.⁴
 The King hom sende word azen, withoute gretinge, this,
 That he ne kepte no thing of hor seruise iwis,
 & that out of loue & treuthe he dude⁵ hom ech on,
 & that he wolde hom seche out, as is pur fon.⁶
 The barons ne couthe other red,⁷ tho hii hurde this,
 Bote bidde Gode's grace, & bataile abide iwis.

¹ To remain.

² Halted.

³ Their embassy.

⁴ With hand and foot.

⁵ Did.

⁶ As his pure (or absolute) enemies.

⁷ Could devise no other counsel.

Hii wende & anisede hom somdel¹ up an doun,
 That hii mizte bewar of hor fon,² & ise³ to toun.
 Some radde, that hii ssolde wende in at on hepe,
 To habbe inome hom vnarmed, and some abedde aslepe.
 The gode men sede, that hii nolde suich vileinie do non,
 Ac abide vort hii come iarmed out ech on.
 Hii houede⁴ vnder boskes, & new kniztes made,
 & armede & attired hom, & hor bedes zerne bade.
 Sir Simond de Mountford conseilede hom vaste,
 Hou hii ssolde hom conteini, the wule the bataile ilaste.
 Tho⁵ com the ost smite out, vaste out of the tounne,
 Mani was the gode bodi, that ther was ibrozth ther doune.
 Vor the Londreis ther biuore a gret despit wrozte⁶
 To the Quene at Londone, Sir Edward ther on thouzte,
 &, vor to awreke⁷ is moder, to hom vaste he drou,
 & brouzte hom to grounde, & some of hom al flemde⁸ he slou.
 Tho he adde this Loundreis al ibrouzte to grounde,
 With gret joye he turnde azen, ac lute⁹ joye he founde.
 Vor the barons were aboue, & is half ouer come.
 The King of Alemaine was in a windmulle inome.¹⁰
 Vor a zong knizt him nom, knizt ymad tho rizt,¹¹
 Sir Jon de Bess [Bevis?] icluped, that was saith god knizt,
 That muche prowessse dude a dai. & the King him zeld¹² in doute
 To the Erl of Gloucetre, as to the hexte¹³ of the route.
 & to the frere menors in to toun Sir Edward fleu vaste,
 & there, as he neede moste, zeld him atte laste.
 Mani on stilleliche¹⁴ hor armes a wei caste,
 & chaungede hom vor herigaus,¹⁵ somdel hii were agaste.¹⁶
 & mani flowe in to the water, & some toward the see,
 & manie passede ouer, & ne come neuere aze.
 Aboute a four thousand & fif hundred me sede
 Atte bataile were aslawe, that was a pitos dede.

¹ They thought and advised together greatly.² Their foes.³ See.⁴ Halted.⁵ When.⁶ Had a great insult wrought.⁷ Avenge.⁸ In flight.⁹ Little.¹⁰ Beset.¹¹ For a young knight him took, a knight full rightly made.¹² Surrendered.¹³ Highest in rank.¹⁴ Privately.¹⁵ Spurs.¹⁶ Greatly they were aghast.



CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST ENGLISH PARLIAMENT.

“It is to the English barons we are indebted for the laws and constitution we possess: their virtues were rude and uncultivated, but they were great and sincere; their understandings were as little polished as their manners, but they had hearts to distinguish right from wrong, they had heads to distinguish truth from falsehood; they understood the rights of humanity, and they had spirit to maintain them.”

—EARL OF CHATHAM.

SOON after the terms of agreement recorded in the previous chapter were concluded, De Montfort broke up his camp at Lewes, and, accompanied by the King, proceeded by way of Battle and Rochester to London. The full effect of the victory of Lewes was shown in the royal edicts which soon followed in quick succession; one of the most important of which, dated May 25th, transferred to the barons the custody of all the royal castles, while another commanded the arrest of all disturbers of the public peace.

Henry was accommodated with a lodging in the palace of the Bishop of London. Westminster Palace had been accidentally burnt two years before; and the King was accordingly obliged to rest content with a residence very different to that which his luxurious and artistic tastes were accustomed to appreciate. In truth, the decoration of his palaces was with

Henry a favourite pastime. He loved to employ the most skilful artists ; and to his well-directed munificence the great Abbey Church of Westminster is indebted for some of its finest ornaments.

Mr Blauuw has recorded some interesting particulars of Henry's love of artistic embellishment. Green, sometimes with golden stars, seems to have been a favourite colour for the walls of his rooms ; but besides the representations of "cherubim with cheerful and merry countenance," and of several saints, especially his royal ancestor Edward the Confessor, there were also some series of scriptural and historical subjects, which must have demanded a certain force of invention and power of expression. Thus William the Florentine, in 1256, was desired to paint "in the wardrobe where the King washes his head" a man rescued from his enemies by his own dogs. Mr Blauuw suggests that a political enigma may be hidden in this device, though it was conceived before the civil war began ; but, at all events, the subject was appropriate to the King's position on many occasions. Other themes, of a nature less congenial to his aspirations, seem, however, to have been frequently selected ; as the story of Alexander—adapted probably from the romance written in 1200—in the Queen's chamber at Nottingham ; and the history of Antioch, with Cœur de Lion's victory over a Saracen combatant. The King's favourite motto, which was profusely inscribed in Latin and French on the walls and doors, and even on his chessboard, seems significant enough of his lavishness towards his favourites :—

"Ke ne dune ke ne tine, ne pret ke desire."

"Qui non dabit quod habet, non accipit ille quod optat."

"He who gives not what he has,
What he seeks shall not receive."

To have loved the fine arts, says Mr Blauuw, in the midst

of an ignorant and barbarous age, must ever be regarded as the distinguishing honour of Henry III.; and by his loving patronage of them, he fulfilled a high and important duty, which has been grievously neglected or misunderstood by too many of his successors. A signal impulse, contemporaneous with the rise and development of the masterpieces of Strasburg, Cologne, Rheims, and Amiens, was communicated during his reign to ecclesiastical architecture in England; and in addition to one hundred and fifty-seven religious houses, many of them of great age and splendour, the noble cathedrals of York, Salisbury, Lichfield, Worcester, Gloucester, Ely, and Winchester were in progress for the future pride and glory of the country.

Eleanor, the noble wife of Prince Edward, was now ordered to quit Windsor Castle, probably because she was an active promoter of schemes for the release of her husband. The royal mandate for her removal is couched in very peremptory terms:—

“The King to Eleanor, consort of our first-born son Edward, health. Since we wish by all means that you should leave our castle of Windsor, where you are now protracting your stay, we command you to come forth from the same, with your daughter, and John de Wiston, your steward, and William Charles, your knight, with two damsels, and the rest of your household, your furniture and goods, and to come to Westminster, there to dwell until we shall have ordained otherwise: And this, as you love our honour and yours, you will by no means omit, because we undertake to excuse you toward the said Edward your lord, and will preserve you harmless: We, therefore, by these present letters patent, receive you, your said daughter, John Wiston, your damsels, and household, and chattels, into safe and secure conduct. In witness whereof, the King, June 18, St Paul’s, London.”

For the better preservation of the peace of the kingdom, De Montfort issued the following orders, or—to borrow an imperial term—decrees:—that no one should carry arms without license, on penalty of death or loss of limbs; and that the

charge of each county should be assigned to a warden, with supreme authority within its limits. Of course, to posts so important De Montfort appointed only his own friends,—as his son Henry to Kent, his son Simon to Surrey and Sussex, Adam de Neumarket to Lincoln, John de Burgh to Norfolk, and Ralph Basset to Leicester. His next step was to obtain a kind of legal confirmation of his proceedings by summoning a great council to meet in London on the 23d of June. It was attended by the prelates and barons, and by four discreet and loyal knights from each county.

This parliament gave such sanction as it could to the exceptional authority—that is, the virtual dictatorship—of De Montfort. “This is the form of peace,” says the preamble, “approved in common and in concord of the Lord the King, the Lord Edward his son, by all the prelates and lords, and by the whole community of the realm of England, to continue firm, stable, and unshaken, both during the reign of the King and of Prince Edward after his death, until the treaty previously settled between the said King and the barons at Lewes, by the form of a certain Mise, should be fulfilled.” It ordered that, until the proposed arbitration should be carried out, the King’s council should consist of nine persons, to be nominated by the Bishop of Chichester, the Earl of Leicester, and the Earl of Gloucester; in other words, by De Montfort himself, who thus became the depositary of supreme power in the kingdom. Provision was also made to ensure the perpetual observance of the Great Charter, the Charter of the Forests, and the time-honoured customs of the realm. Aliens, both laymen and clerics, merchants and others, were allowed to come, stay, and go, peaceably and freely, on condition of their not bearing arms or assembling in suspicious numbers.

The ecclesiastical administration of the kingdom was at the same time entrusted to three bishops, and Boniface, Arch-

bishop of Canterbury, was threatened with the confiscation of his estates if he did not immediately return from abroad, and confirm certain prelates who had been elected in his absence.

De Montfort next proceeded to guard against an apprehended invasion by an armed force of foreigners, collected by the Queen and her son Edmund, at Domme in Flanders. For this purpose he summoned to arms all the horse and the foot in the counties opposite the Flemish fort ; a summons to which the response was hearty and immediate. He also assembled a large force on Barham Downs, whither the court repaired.

Nor did he neglect the proposed form of arbitration. As Louis of France would not consent to review the decision he had already come to, it was necessary to agree upon some other referees. Prince Henry, the son of the King of the Romans, was therefore despatched on an embassy to Louis, "in order more fully to treat of and confirm the peace, he previously swearing to be faithful to that single object, and to return by the Nativity of the Virgin" (that is, the 8th of September). As security for his faithful performance of this mission, though none other was needed than his honourable character, nine bishops were bound in a sum of twenty thousand marks, and three French envoys pledged themselves that he should not be detained abroad.

The result of this mission was an agreement that all the questions in dispute, except the employment of aliens, should be referred to the decision of the Bishop of London, Hugh le Despenser the Justiciary, Charles of Anjou (brother of Louis of France), and the Abbot of Bec. If on any point the arbitrators differed, the Archbishop of Rouen was to act as referee, and his decision was to be final.

There seemed every prospect now of a permanent reconciliation being effected between the King and his barons. But the Church of Rome, even in those days the disturber of the

public peace, suddenly interfered on the side of the King, and despatched the Cardinal Gurth di Fuliodis (afterwards Pope Clement IV., and a man of great astuteness and diplomatic skill) to withdraw the Anglican clergy from the barons' cause. De Montfort at once refused to allow the legate to land in England, and treated with contempt his demand that he should release the King and Princes, "detained as hostages under an empty colour of words, by virtue of a certain Mise that had been concluded" (August 12). The legate then summoned the Bishops of London, Worcester, Winchester, and Chichester to meet him at Boulogne. They showed themselves no less independent than the barons, and refused to go, while, strong in the consciousness that the popular sympathies were with them, they appealed to a general council of the clergy to be held at Reading.

Unable to bribe or beguile De Montfort and his adherents into a surrender of their national independence, the legate resorted to the arsenal which Rome kept so amply supplied with spiritual weapons, and pronouncing the barons contumacious, he solemnly excommunicated them and their adherents "as rebels, especially Simon De Montfort, Gilbert de Clare, Roger Earl of Norfolk, the city of London, and the Cinque Ports, exempting only the King and his chaplains, whom we do not believe sincerely to adhere to their cause." And by way of striking at the body as well as at the soul, he also prohibited the exportation of wine, wheat, or any other merchandise to London.

These penalties, however, were emphatically *bruta fulmina*. The authorities of the Cinque Ports were on the watch to prevent the arrival of the legate's messengers in England. Intercepting them on the high seas, they compelled them to surrender their formidable documents, and quietly flung them overboard.

The position of De Montfort at this period, however, notwithstanding his indomitable energy, was not without difficulty and peril. So long as he was merely the champion of the popular cause, he was safe ; his position was well defined ; nay, it was even legal ; but the moment that he became the virtual dictator of the kingdom, though professedly governing in the name of the King, he exercised a power unknown to the law, and incompatible with the constitution. A recent writer makes on this point some very just and admirable remarks, which we cannot refrain from quoting *in extenso*, they throw so clear a light on the dangers that lay in the great Earl's future path.¹

"It is evident, as we watch the current of events, how surely Montfort was being drifted away from the strength of his original position. The common sense of mankind re-echoed the sentiments of Pope Urban, and denounced as a mockery all attempts at negotiation between a subject and his prisoner-king. Until the King was at liberty, there could be no valid treaty ; yet to release the King was to give the signal for war, and for a war of so doubtful an issue, that it was impossible to dare the venture. A power unknown to the constitution, a power which would be sure to move the jealousy of his own equals in rank, and to excite just apprehension even in un-biased minds, had become, chiefly through the one false step of making the King his prisoner, an unhappy necessity to Montfort. He had begun to feel this ; he evidently knew his difficulty ; but he knew also where he was strong. In the days of the Great Charter, the firmest supports of the popular cause had been the clergy and the city of London, and they were again the firmest supporters of De Montfort.

"Nothing," continues our authority, "is more remarkable in the career of this great man than the enthusiastic confidence

¹ *Quarterly Review*, vol. cxix., pp. 54, 55.

which he felt, and which he inspired in the most eminent churchmen of his day. He was, as we have pointed out, the intimate friend of the learned and pious Grosseteste and Adam de Marisco. Grosseteste he habitually consulted, and committed to him in his own absence the care of his children. The loss of the erudite, though less celebrated, Archdeacon of Leicester, John of Basingstoke, he is said to have felt as one of the heaviest sorrows of his life; and in his last Parliament (of 1265), when his influence was supreme, and his ambition, whether pure or sordid, most transparent to the world, there was chosen as Chancellor Thomas Cantelupe, the last Englishman who has attained to a place in the Roman calendar. The clerical party of the day compares him with the most popular of all English saints :—

‘ Comme ly martyr de Canterbyr, priist sa vie ;
Ne voleit pas li bon Thomas que perist seinte Eglise,
Ly Arcus auxi se combati, e morust sauntz fugatise.’

“ His own language,” says the reviewer, “ his life, the eulogy of his friends, concur to show that he regarded himself, and was regarded by others, as pre-eminently the champion of the Church. And we know enough of his career to understand at least the main outline of his policy. It was essentially the policy of a statesman as opposed to that of a king. The temptation which no holder of the crown found himself altogether able to resist, was to make common cause with the Pope at the expense of the Church at home. The abuse of provisions superseding the rights of the capitular electors, as well as of private patrons, was the subject of continual remonstrance. The crown was obliged to present to the Pope the petitions which were forced upon itself; but it was never thoroughly in earnest, and the chapters reluctantly accepted the Papal nominee of to-day, with the understanding that they should be equally obliged to receive the royal nominee of to-

morrow. So also in the matter of taxation. The English Church appealed to the crown to protect it against Roman exaction, but the crown found it was more profitable to acquiesce and to share in the spoliation. Montfort would have confided to the Church a full freedom in her elections; he would have protected her firmly against foreign encroachments on her privileges and on her revenues; and he would have trusted by so doing to make her intensely national in feeling—the strongest, because the most intelligent supporter of the crown. In precisely the same spirit he would have dealt with the rising importance of the towns. The towns had been hitherto regarded as almost a sort of royal chattel. They derived their corporate existence from the simple fiat of the crown, which had obtained in return, and in spite of the Great Charter had continued to exercise, the power of imposing tollages, dues, and customs almost at absolute discretion. They were consequently, of course, in a state of chronic disaffection. Montfort would have dealt with them, as with the national church, in a freer and more confiding spirit. He would have liberated their commerce, confirmed their self-government, and trusted to them to uphold the administration whose supporting hand they felt. His sympathies were well known; he had at least in one notable instance interfered or pleaded with the crown on behalf of the city of London; he had led the citizens very early to make his cause their own, and he found them true to the end."

Our quotation has been a long one, but it is so seldom that our English writers manifest a just appreciation of De Montfort's career and policy—too many of them looking at it only from a monarchical point of view—that we gladly transfer to our pages a passage written in a fair, liberal, and discriminating spirit.

De Montfort and his party had to contend not only with

the authority and fulminations of the Pope, but with the intrigues of Queen Eleanor, who was actively engaged, there is reason to believe, in endeavouring to secure the direct interference of the French King, and to obtain supplies of men and money, by selling or pledging the English provinces in France. That the King himself was alarmed at her possible designs may be inferred from the following curious letter, which was conveyed to Queen Eleanor by the Dean of Wells:—¹

“ WINDSOR, *November 18th, 1264.*

“ The King to the Queen of England, health and sincerely affectionate love. Know that we and our first-born, Edward, are well and safe, which we heartily long to hear of you ; signifying to you that the business which concerns ourself, you, and our said son, so proceeds to the honour of God, of ourselves, and of yourself, blessed be God, that we have a well-grounded hope of having a firm and good peace in our kingdom, on which account be cheerful and merry. Moreover, we have heard that certain persons at this time propose to make a sale or alienation of our lands, and of the prerogative of ourself and our son in these parts, to the disinherittance of us and our heirs, against our will, which you ought by no means either to wish or permit ; wherefore we send to command you that you suffer nothing to be done or attempted in such matters. On these and other concerns, give credence to what Master Edward de la Arrol, Dean of Wells, bearer of this present, shall say to you on our behalf. Witness the King, at Windsor.”

The hostage Princes, meanwhile, had been removed from Dover to Berkhamstead, and thence to the Palace of Wallingford, which had been enlarged, restored, and embellished by the King of the Romans for his own residence. They were treated with a free and frank courtesy, and with so little restraint, that some of their more zealous partisans at Bristol conceived the idea of releasing them from captivity. Led by Robert Waleran and Warren de Basingbourne, they made a rapid march upon Wallingford, and surprised the garrison at

¹ Rymer's "Foedera."

dawn of day. They were met, however, by a sturdier resistance than they had anticipated; and when they demanded Prince Edward's release, De Montfort's soldiers threatened to fasten him to a military engine and launch him into the midst of the besiegers, a threat which induced the Prince to appear on the ramparts and urge his partisans to retire.

"That hii wolde Sir Edwarde vawe out to hom sende,
Illithered with a mangonel, home with hom to lede."¹

This attempt, though unsuccessful, led to the removal of the hostages to the stronger castle of Kenilworth, where they were received by the Countess of Leicester with a high-bred welcome.

"Jam respirat Anglia, sperans libertatem,
Cui Dei gratia det prosperitatem,"

says a contemporary poet; now England breathed at peace, in the sweet hope of liberty; and to the statesman's mind of De Montfort, it seemed an excellent opportunity for formally recognising the growing influence and prosperity of the great boroughs. He therefore, by royal summons, dated from Worcester on the 14th of December, ordered a Parliament to assemble in London on the octave of St Hilary (January 25, 1265). To this were invited twenty-five bishops, friars, and deans, an unusual number (eighty-three) of abbots and heads of monasteries, the earls and barons, two knights from the shire, and, for the first time, two discreet and loyal men from each city and town. This remarkable innovation is admitted by all authorities to have been the origin of popular representation, and thus, in effect, of constitutional government. That De Montfort foresaw *all* the important consequences which would flow from his bold and well-considered step, it is unnecessary

¹ That they would fain send Sir Edward out to them, fastened with a mangonel, to lead home with them.

to suppose ; but, unquestionably, it was dictated by his popular sympathies, and is a signal proof of his courage, capacity, and foresight.

One of the first measures of the new Parliament was to embody in an Act, dated March 31st, the conditions of pacification between the King and barons. Prince Edward and his cousin, Prince Henry, were set at liberty ; the former was permitted to have a body-guard for three years, but a body-guard of Englishmen only ; and the castles given up at Lewes,—namely, those of Dover, Scarborough, Bamborough, Nottingham, and Corfe,—were to be held by the council for five years ; while, still further to lessen his power of disturbing the kingdom, he was required to surrender to Simon de Montfort, in exchange for other lands of equal value, the whole county and castle of Chester, as well as the fortresses of Pee and Newcastle-on-Lyne.

This arrangement was announced by public proclamation, and nine bishops menaced with excommunication all persons who acted in opposition to it. It was followed by the promotion of Simon de Montfort to the office of Justiciar of the realm, and thus the great Earl became in rank, as before he had been in power, the first subject in the kingdom.

He had now attained the climax of his fortunes, and thenceforth the sun of his prosperity began to decline. From causes which history leaves obscure, a disagreement arose between him and his powerful adherent the Earl of Gloucester. Either it was the result of the pride of the Justiciar's sons, or it was induced by the jealousy with which De Clare regarded the superior influence and popularity of the champion of the commons. Meaner motives may also have contributed to it ; and it was known that he was grievously wounded by De Montfort's refusal to make over to him the large ransom of the King of the Romans.

The ill-feeling rankling in the mind of Gloucester was exhibited in a plot which he meditated to seize upon De Montfort and his sons at a tournament announced by the latter to be held at Dunstable in February. Whether because he had received information of this treachery, or whether because he considered an armed gathering dangerous in the circumstances of the country, the Earl, in the name of the King, forbade the tournament. The prohibition was ill-received by De Clare and the other combatants, but De Montfort threatened to cast those who disobeyed into a place where they should enjoy neither sun nor moon ; and repairing to Dunstable with a strong force, effectually prevented the public peace from being endangered.

De Clare now determined on abandoning the popular cause, and secretly opened up a correspondence with the royalist partisan Roger de Mortimer, in Wales. The latter was at first suspicious, and not unnaturally, of his good faith ; but when assured of De Clare's resolution to throw all his influence on the royal side, he gladly negotiated a treaty with him. De Montfort seems to have had some intelligence of the treachery that was working against him, and demanded from De Clare some fresh pledges of his fidelity. The Earl, however, evaded compliance, and leaving London under the pretext that his presence was needed on his own estates, he began to collect his followers at Gloucester, with the view of striking a blow at his former friend as soon as opportunity offered.

“ The wende the Erl from Londone priveliche and stille,
As to socori is land, age Sir Simonde's will.”¹

Nor was this the only danger De Montfort was called upon to confront. In April he hurried northward to suppress a royalist outbreak. Shortly afterwards we find him at Gloucester and at Hereford, equally intent on crushing the first signs of insurrection. This irresistible energy it may have been, joined

¹ Robert of Gloucester.

to the urgent entreaties of mutual friends,¹ which induced De Clare to patch up a temporary reconciliation with the Justiciar ; and a fair prospect of peace was opening up, when an event as unexpected as it was untoward completely changed the spirit of the scene.

Prince Edward, who, since March, had been treated as a prisoner on parole, had accompanied the King to Hereford, where he was attended by companions of his own choice : Thomas de Clare, brother of the Earl of Gloucester, whose treachery Leicester was far from suspecting ; Robert de Ros, a gallant knight of his own age ; and Henry de Montfort, with whom he had been familiar for many years :—

“ Sir Simon de Mountfort out of warde nom²
 Sir Edward, him to solaci, that to lute³ thonc him com.
 He bitok him Sir Henri is sone, to be is compainoun,
 With him to wende aboute, to sywe him up and doun.”

At this time the Earl de Warrenne and William de Valence had landed on the coast of Pembroke, and needed only a leader like Prince Edward to raise the standard of civil war. His escape was, therefore, designed. A fine horse, remarkable for his swiftness,⁴ was sent him as a present, and he affected a strong desire to test its speed against the best horses of his retinue, that he might judge of its fitness for the joust and tournament. For this purpose he repaired with them to a convenient spot called Widmarsh, lying to the north of the town. Here he mounted in succession the horses of all his attendants, and, on the plea of trying their paces, contrived to exhaust their energies :—

“ He asayed⁵ them bi and bi, and retreied them ilk one,
 And stoned⁶ them alle weary, standing still as stone.”

William Rishanger.

⁴ Henry Knyghton.

² Took him out of custody.

⁵ Essayed, tried.

³ Little.

⁶ Stunned.

Having thus disabled them from pursuit, he mounted his own fresh steed, and galloped merrily away,—accompanied by two knights and four squires,—flinging a parting sarcasm at De Ros :—

“ Lordlings, good day ; greet my father, and say,
Out of thrall I will see him as soon as I may.”¹

Falling in with a party of horsemen, who had been appointed to meet him, he made his way in safety to De Mortimer's castle of Wigmore, a distance of about four-and-twenty miles.

This escape was effected on the evening of Thursday, May 28th. Two days later, a royal proclamation was issued, summoning the King's troops to meet at Worcester, with the view of crushing De Warrenne and De Valence before Prince Edward could join them. But, meanwhile, the Earl of Gloucester, having exacted from the Prince an oath that he would respect the laws and customs of the realm, openly deserted to the side of the royalists,—a defection which De Montfort and his adherents felt to be of the gravest danger to the popular cause :—

“ Schent² is ilk baroun, now Gilbert turnes grim,
The Montfort Sir Simoun most affied³ on him.
Alas, Sir Gilbert, thou turnèd thine oth,
At Stryvelyn⁴ were it herd, how God therefor was wroth.”

It is worth noting, that throughout his brief dictatorship,

¹ Robert of Gloucester.

² Troubled is each baron.

³ Trusted in him.

⁴ Stirling. “At the Battle of Bannockburn, near Stirling, his son, Gilbert de Clare, was killed in 1316. It is curious to find so distant a calamity considered as a retribution on his present treachery.”

De Montfort took the people, so to speak, into his immediate confidence. He made no attempt to conceal the defection of De Clare, but openly announced, in a public proclamation, that "he had fled to assist the rebellion of De Warrenne, in contempt of his oath to abide by the written agreement which had lately appeased the discord between him and the Earl of Leicester; while Prince Edward, by his inconsiderate levity, had wholly lost the grace of public favour, which he had acquired by voluntarily becoming hostage."

On the next day (June 8, 1265), the King issued an order to the Bishop of London to excommunicate the Prince, "whom the rebels had, unhappily, found light to believe and easy to circumvent." But such spiritual weapons were useless against the heir to the crown,—a young prince already distinguished by his valour and conduct; and the royalists having found a leader whom they could all unite in obeying, immediately arose in great force. Edward was soon at the head of a considerable army, with which he marched upon Gloucester. The city was taken after a fifteen days' siege, chiefly through the treachery of Grimbald Pauncefoot, who received knighthood as the reward of his baseness. This success recalled De Montfort from South Wales. Apprehending the full extent of the danger, he immediately summoned his son Simon, who had been besieging Pevensey Castle, to his assistance. The latter obeyed the mandate, took and plundered Winchester on his march, and thence proceeded to Kenilworth, his father's castle. There, unaware of the energy and activity of his new antagonist, he displayed a total indifference to the commonest military precautions. Instead of confining himself and his knights within the stout ramparts of the fortress, he lodged in the village of Kenilworth, that he might the more easily indulge in the revelling and "riotrie" to which he was unfortunately addicted.

“ And ther it fel, alas, his heir hert him sende,¹
Vor so much he tolde of him sulf, and of his grete mighte,
That him ne deinde nogt² to ligge in the castel by nighte,
And ther he sojourned eft, then riotrie tham schant,
Suilk ribandrie thei led, thei gaf no tale³ of whant.”⁴

After spending six days in idle feasting, his unguarded state was discovered by a woman named Margoth, employed as a spy in male disguise, and she forwarded intelligence of it to Prince Edward. With his usual alacrity, he prepared to profit by the negligence of his enemy ; and effecting a rapid march by night, he entered Kenilworth early in the morning of the 2d of August, before any alarm of his approach was given. The royalists, it is said, aroused their opponents from their heavy slumbers with loud shouts, “Come out, ye traitors ! By the death of God, you shall all be slain !” They took but little heed, says Robert of Gloucester, to awaken them softly ; they gave them no time to clothe themselves well ; and Simon himself with difficulty, and almost naked, escaped into the castle.

“ Of soft awakunge hii toke lute gome,
Vor to wel clothe hom, hii ne geve hom no tom ;
Ac Sir Symond him sulf among alle is fon,
In to the castel scapede an naked man annethe.”⁵

Another chronicler quaintly depicts the disorder that ensued. Some of the barons, he says, were seen to fly with only their hose on ; some with only a shirt or drawers ; while others fled with their clothes under their arms. Few or none found time to don all their garments. Among the prisoners taken were twenty bannerets ; and so many horses were captured, that the very foot-boys of the royalists rode back triumphant on the

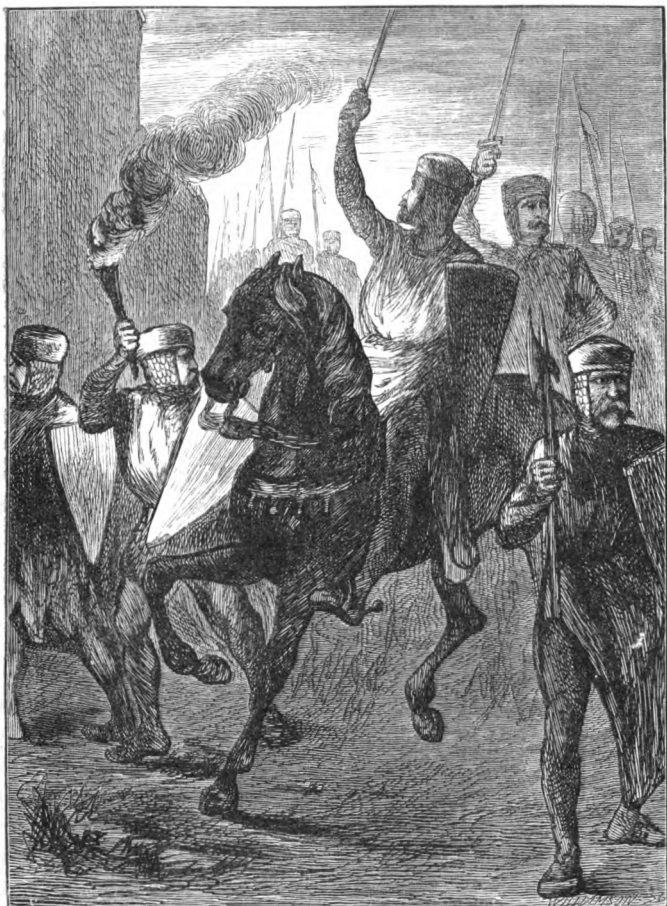
¹ His pride did send him hurt.

² He did not deign.

³ Took no account.

⁴ Robert of Gloucester.

⁵ Robert of Gloucester.



' They entered Kenilworth early in the morning, before any alarm of their approach was given, and aroused their opponents with loud shouts, " Come out, ye traitors ! " '—
WARRIOR, PRIEST, AND STATESMAN, page 328.

superb chargers of the fugitive knights.¹ In truth, this *coup de main* was a death-blow to the cause of the barons, and effectually counteracted De Montfort's designs, who had counted on the arrival of his son to enclose Prince Edward between two armies.

¹ Chronicle of the Monks of Mailros, cit. by Blauuw.





CHAPTER V.

THE BATTLE OF EVESHAM.

“ Salve, Symon Montis Fortis,
Totius flos militiæ ;
Duras pœnas passus mortis
Protector gentis Angliæ.”

—*Miracula Sim. de Montforti.*

“ Hail, Simon de Montfort, hail !
Knighthood's fairest flower !
England doth thy death bewail,
Whom thou didst shield with power.”

—W. H. BLAUW.

THE position of De Montfort was now very critical. On the Welsh frontier he was menaced by the forces of De Clare and De Mortimer, and his own army was insufficient, not only to cope with these, but to encounter the gallant host under Prince Edward. Ignorant of the disaster at Kenilworth, he resolved to march eastward and effect a junction with his son. For this purpose, he advanced quickly from Hereford, and crossed the Severn at Kempsey, from whence, on Monday, the 3d of August, he marched towards Evesham. Intelligence of his movements, however, was communicated to the Prince by a traitor, Ralph de Arderne; and Edward, preparing to take advantage of the

Earl's ignorance of his son's discomfiture, broke up his camp at Worcester, and hastened in pursuit of his great enemy.

The Vale of Evesham has long been famous for its pastoral wealth and rich soft beauty. As Drayton exclaims in his *Poly-Olbion*—

“Great Evesham's fertile glebe what tongue hath not extolled,
As though to her alone belonged the garb of gold?”

It is brightened and fertilised by the winding Avon, which, flowing southward from Offenham, makes, below Evesham, an abrupt and striking angle. The area thus enclosed, a triangle whose base is formed by a gently undulating ground, and whose two sides are washed by the river, is the scene of what the old chronicler expressively calls the “murder of Evesham.” Each side of this triangle is about 2 miles, and its base $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles long. The town of Evesham lies to the right of its point, or apex, in the river-watered plain.

At early dawn on Tuesday, August 4th, De Montfort's small army prepared to cross the Avon, and resume its march eastward. Mass was celebrated by the Bishop of Worcester, and knights and men-at-arms made ready to follow their leader's banner, when up through the valley, in the very direction that young De Montfort was expected, a large force was seen to approach, bearing in their van the welcome ensigns of the barons. A shout of joy was sent up at the auspicious sight; but whether the Earl felt any doubts, or whether, as a mere measure of military prudence, Nicholas, the Earl's barber and surgeon, and a man well versed in heraldic lore, was despatched to reconnoitre carefully the advancing host. Ascending the clock-tower of the Abbey of Evesham, he soon detected among the crowd of banners the triple lions of Prince Edward, and the insignia of Roger de Mortimer. The mistake was discovered, but too late. De Montfort was shut in by the river

on his flanks and rear, and by the greatly superior force of the royalists in front, so that retreat was no less impossible than victory.

Profiting by the lessons of De Montfort, Prince Edward had marshalled his force in orderly array ; and they advanced with so much skill, that the Earl was prompt to exclaim, " By the arm of St James,"—his favourite oath,—“they come on right martially ; but it is from me they have learned that method, not from themselves !” Then, recognising the hopelessness of his position, he besought his friends to escape while they could, and said, with a sigh, “God have mercy on our souls ! our bodies are theirs !”¹ His son Henry entreated him to save his life by flight, while he and his friends bore the brunt of the enemy’s onset. The aged hero replied, “Far be from me the thought of so shameful a course ! Nay, my dear son, I have grown old in war, and my life nears its end. All of our noble race have been in this one thing, at least, conspicuous. They have never fled, nor wished to flee, from battle. But do thou, my son, lest thou perish in the flower of thy youth, withdraw from this fated field ; thou who art now about to succeed, if God wills it, to me and my illustrious ancestors in the glories of war.”

But from that field of death not even the meanest varlet would have willingly retired, there was then so much true mettle in the English blood !

The battle lasted two hours. From the nature of the ground, and the great inequality of numbers, De Montfort had no opportunity of displaying his unrivalled tactical abilities. It was a hand-to-hand combat, in which the superior force of the royalists necessarily prevailed, though at one time they wavered before the terrible fury of De Montfort and his veterans. He, himself, says one of the chroniclers, fought stoutly, like a giant,

¹ Robert of Gloucester.

for the liberties of England. When the royalists singled him out as the special object of their attack, he defended himself "like an impregnable tower." His friends crowded round him to defend him with the ramparts of their bodies, but one by one they fell. He was summoned to surrender. "I yield not to dogs and perjurers," he cried; "but to God alone!" Covered with wounds, and beaten down by sheer force, at length he fell, slain but not conquered; and thus ended, "by an honourable death, the inbred chivalry and prowess which so many heroic deeds had ennobled in so many lands." His gallant son did not long survive him. Guy, another son, was severely wounded, and taken up for dead, but afterwards recovered, to play out the stirring drama of his life elsewhere. The battle became a massacre, for Prince Edward had ordered his soldiers to give no quarter; and the best and bravest of the barons' party fell on the field of Evesham. And over the scene suddenly spread a dense darkness, and the earth quaked, and the thunder pealed, and the lightning flashed; so that the superstition of the time represented Heaven as sympathising while "the people of the Lord were in torment."

With similar feelings was regarded the appearance of a great comet, which spread its light "across half the heavens during several months this year." *After* the event, it was supposed to have presaged the battle of Evesham.

And, as old Grafton says, "a cruel and bloodie bataille it was; after which, in despite of the Erle, some malicious persons cut off his head, mutilating him otherwise with a barbaritie too disgusting to mention. His feet also, and his handes, were cut off from his body, and sent to sundrie places; and the trunck of his bodye was buried within the church of Evesham." The hands and the head, fixed on a spear's point, were sent as a present to the wife of Roger de Mortimer, at her castle of Wigmore. "May that precursor of the Lord," says William de

Rishanger, "whose head was served up at a banquet by a dancer, help the sender's soul."

It was told at a later date that the bearer of this fearful trophy to Wigmore had not found the Lady Matilda in the castle. She was at mass in the neighbouring abbey, and thither the messenger followed her, still carrying the great Earl's head, and thrusting into his bosom the maimed hands sewn up in a cloth. As he rushed into the church in the eagerness of his zeal, says Blauuw,¹ and whispered the tidings of victory into the ears of the devout lady at the moment of the elevation of the Host, as if from the force of long habit during life, the hands of Simon de Montfort, now irresistibly attracted to their accustomed duties at so solemn a service, were seen by the whole congregation to be raised up over the messenger's head, clasped together in prayer, although they were afterwards found within the bag with its stitches undisturbed as before. The Lady Matilda, herself a witness of this scene, is said to have refused the hands admittance to the castle, and sent them back to Evesham.

As this marvel was enacted among the Earl's enemies only, adds Mr Blauuw, it naturally became the forerunner of many among his friends; and in spite of the discouragement of the court, the odour of his supposed sanctity diffused its efficacy over the land. The particulars of two hundred and twelve miracles have been noted down as they occurred, comprising all manner of cures effected, not only on men, but on horses, oxen, and hawks. Fevers, fits, blindness, dumbness, even death itself, all gave way, says Mr Blauuw, when the patients were true believers, while distant revilers were struck dumb. Of the prayers directly addressed to him, one specimen has been handed down to us:—²

¹ Blauuw's "*Barons' War*," pp. 256, 257.

² See the "*Miracula Simonis de Monteforti*," published by the Camden Society.

"Sis pro nobis intercessor
Apud Deum, qui defensor
In terra extiteras. . . ."

"Never did saint such tortures rend
As thee, of martyr race :
Those who on earth didst God defend
Now gain for us God's grace."

But besides prayer, continues our authority,¹ other curious modes of obtaining relief by his intercession were in common use ; such as bending money in his honour, and the process of "mensuration," which consisted of the application to the sufferer of some fillet or string, which had been previously put round the saint's body. Several priests attest the authenticity of such miracles as the following :—A certain man at Hawkesbury, dumb and convulsed for seven years, being measured by the Earl, immediately recovered from all his infirmities. The Abbot of Pershore, and many others, bear witness to this. To other wonders, the Priors of Gloucester, Oxford, and Walsham testify. The Countess of Gloucester, the Countess of Albemarle, and many noble ladies, also appear as witnesses. Persons drowned and burnt to death recovered. "Avicia, daughter of Alan of Derby, after being most certainly dead, roused herself, and got well, on being measured by Earl Simon." "Gregory de Grandern, rector of the church of Sapecot, reports that his ox, which would not eat for fifteen days, immediately ate greedily, and recovered, on a piece of money being bent in honour of the Earl." Other instances are attested by whole parishes and towns, among which some are dated as late as 1278, proving how long the memory of Simon de Montfort continued to exercise an influence on the minds of men. Pilgrims came to his tomb from all parts of the country, and though persons of all ranks readily bore witness to the miracles per-

¹ Blauuw's "Barons' War," pp. 257, 258.

formed there, yet none dared to talk openly of them, from fear of the King and Prince Edward.

And so, says William Rishanger, so did that glorious man, Earl Simon, finish his labours—he who devoted, not only his wealth, but his own self, in behalf of the oppressed poor, in the defence of justice, and of the rights and customs of the realm. Much, too, was he to be lauded for his love of letters, and his punctual attendance at religious services. He was frugal also, and accustomed more to watch at nights than to sleep. He was steadfast to his word, grave in appearance, especially trustworthy, and reverent towards churchmen. Endeavouring to follow in the steps of the saintly Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, he entrusted to him the education of his children. By his advice he dealt with every difficulty, and whatever he undertook he accomplished, particularly those matters which he regarded as of the highest usefulness. It is said, indeed, that the great enterprise for which he strove unto death was imposed upon him for the remission of his sins by the injunction of the Bishop, who declared that the peace of the English Church could not be secured without the sword, and that all who died for it should be crowned with martyrdom. The Bishop also, it is said, foresaw that the father and son would die on the same day, and assured young Henry, placing his hand upon his head, that they should both perish in the cause of truth and justice.

“When the tidings of his death,” adds Rishanger, “spread over the land, all mirth was suspended, and a general lamentation arose, until our tears and groans were changed into hymns of praise and joy, through the many miracles wrought by his invincible firmness, patience, and purity of faith, which encouraged the hope that we might yet be released from the tyranny of the unjust.”

A hope that was abundantly fulfilled! The murder of Evesham

did not undo the great work done at Lewes. A nation's history does not depend upon the life of any single hero, however largely it may be influenced by that hero's character and actions. The torch which is lighted by his genius and perseverance is handed down from generation to generation ; and so the idea of popular representation, evolved by Simon de Montfort, was developed by the men who succeeded him in the championship of the popular cause, until it has become the recognised principle of constitutional government in the New World as in the Old.

To conclude : the Earl, as a military commander, was gifted with more than ordinary ability, and thoroughly understood the art of war as practised in his time. As a soldier, his courage was of the most brilliant description ; his resolution was prompt, his constancy impregnable. His devout observance of the rites of the Church is frequently the theme of contemporary panegyric. His affection for his wife and children almost exceeded the limits of moderation. He was dignified of mien, grave of address, and with that natural air of command which is given to men born to lead their fellows. A French chronicler speaks of him as " noble, skilful in arms, and wise beyond all his contemporaries." His calmness and equability were conspicuous in the hour of triumph. Like all great men, he possessed a peculiar power of moulding and influencing the minds of those with whom he came in contact. It was thus that he led onward the proud barons of England in a course which it is certain few, if any of them, understood in all its importance. In fine, he was a man before his age ; and, as the monk of Mailros says, a man of wonderful forethought and circumspection, excelling in the preparation and conduct of war, a complete soldier, abounding in subtle stratagems, worthy of his illustrious parentage, and endowed with more than human wisdom.

The more sagacious spirits of his age fully recognised that he was guided in his career by no selfish ambition or mean greed of power, but that he was, in very truth and sincerity, the champion of the Church and people. There is a remarkable passage to this effect in the old poem entitled the "Lament of Simon de Montfort"—a passage which forms a suitable epitaph for a popular hero:—¹

" Més par sa mort le Cuens Mountfort,
 Conquist la victorie
 Come ly martyr de Caunterbyr
 Finist sa vie ;
 Ne voleit pas li bon Thomas
 Qe perist Seinte Eglise,
 Ly Cuens ansi se combati,
 E morust sauntz feyntise.
 Ore est ocys la flur de pris,
 Qe taunt savoit de guere,
 Ly Cuens Montfort, sa dure mort
 Molt emplorra la terre.

" Qe voleuit moryr e mentenir
 La pees e la dreiture,
 Le seint martir lur fra joyr,
 Sa conscience pure,
 Qe velt moryr e sustenir
 Les hommes de la terre
 Son bon desir acomplir
 Quar bien le quidom fere.
 Ore ocys la flur de pris,
 Qe taunt savoit de quere,
 Ly Cuens Montfort, sa dure mort
 Molt emplorra la terre."

TRANSLATED.

Yet by the blow that laid thee low,
 Brave Earl, one palm was given ;

¹ Printed in Ritson's "Ancient Songs," and translated by George Ellis. See Blauuw, p. 263.

Nor less at thine, than Becket's shrine,
Shall rise our vows to heaven.
Our Church and laws, your common cause,
'Twas his the Church to save ;
Our rights restored, thou, generous Lord,
Shall triumph in the grave.
Ah ! low now lies our flower of price,
Who led the war so well !
Earl Montfort's death shall England's breath
Bewail with woe and knell.

Each righteous lord who braved the sword,
And for our safety died,
With conscience pure shall aye endure
The martyred saint beside.
That martyred saint was never faint
To ease the poor man's care,
With gracious will he shall fulfil
Our just and earnest prayer.
Ah ! low now lies our flower of price,
Who led the war so well !
Earl Montfort's death shall England's breath
Bewail with woe and knell.

We do not mean to say that De Montfort foresaw all the consequences of his act in admitting the citizens of England to a voice in the government of this country. He was a statesman, and not a seer. But not the less is he entitled to the praise of having been the first great English noble with really popular sympathies, and with a living sense of truth and justice. And, therefore, while granting that he was of an imperious temper, and impatient of the instruments with whom he had to deal—that, in his later years, he was occasionally led by circumstances into acts of ambition and self-aggrandisement,—we submit that few of our English worthies are more clearly entitled to our love and gratitude.

“ When the full survey is taken, we shall not forget what is

due to the statesman who first struck the key-note of constitutional government, and showed that there was more both of wisdom and of strength in a confiding appeal to a free people than in the coercive despotism of the first Plantagenets. We shall remember, too, that he applied his principle, with a breadth of view and an evenness of hand too rare in later times, to the Church as well as to the State; and that almost alone of feudal statesmen he perceived that the first privileges of a national clergy might become, not the chronic difficulty of the State, but her surest and least perishable safeguard. Lastly, we shall bear in mind that, over the coarse ignorance and impure rudeness of the old feudal manners, he bore himself in calm, gentle superiority, cultivated, refined, and unsullied, the very model of an English gentleman; so English in heart, so true to the land of his adoption, that we almost forget, as we think of him, the parentage that is implied in the name of SIMON DE MONTFORT."

NOTE.

THE BATTLE OF EVESHAM.

(From Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle.)

"He wende him out of Hereford mid vair ost inou,
& toward Keningwurthe azen is sone he drou.
& was hor beire porpos, to biclosi hor fon,¹
As wo seith,² in either half, & to ssende hom ech on.
So that Sir Simon the old³ com, the Monendai iwis,
To a toun biside Wircetre, that Kemeseie⁴ ihote is.
The Tiwesday to Evesham he wende the morweninge,
& there he left him⁵ & is folc prestes massen singe,

¹ To enclose their foes.

⁴ Called.

² As the saying is.

⁵ And there he ordered.

³ Elder.

& thozte to wende northward, is sone vor to mete.
 Ac the King nolde a vot,¹ bote he dinede other etc.²
 & Sir Simon the zonge³ & is ost at Alcestre were,
 & nolde thanne wende a vot,⁴ ar hii dinede there.⁵
 Thulke⁶ to diners deluol⁷ were, alas !
 Vor mani was the gode bodi, that ther thoru islawe was.
 Sir Edward & is poer sone come tho ride
 To the north half of the toun, bataile vor to abide.
 Tho Sir Simon it iwaste,⁸ & hii that with him were,
 Sone hii lete⁹ hom armi, & hor baners arere.¹⁰
 The Bissop Water of Wurcetre asoiled¹¹ hom alle there,
 & prechede hom, that hii adde of deth the lasse fere.
 Then wei euene to hor son a Gode's half hii nome,¹²
 & wende,¹³ that Sir Simon the zonge azen hom come.
 Sir Edward's oft, & othere al so nei,
 He avisede the oft suithe wel, &, thoru Gode's grace,
 He hopede winne a day the maistre of the place,
 Tho sei he ther biside, as he bihulde aboute,
 The Erle's baner of Gloucetre, & him mid al is route,
 As him vor to close, in the other half ywis.
 'Onz,¹⁴ he sede, 'redi folk & wel iwar this is,¹⁵
 & more conne of bataile, than hii couthe bivore.¹⁶
 Vr soules,' he sede, 'abbe God,¹⁷ vor vr bodies heth hore.¹⁸
 Sir Henri,' he sede to is sone, 'this hath imad thi prute.¹⁹
 Were thi brother icome, hope we mizte zute.'²⁰
 Hii bitoke²¹ lif & soule to Gode's grace ech on ;

¹ But the King would not stir a foot. ² But he dined there again.

³ Younger.

⁴ And would not go thence a foot.

⁵ But they dined or banqueted there.

⁶ This.

⁷ To divers was doleful.

⁸ Knew.

⁹ Some they left the army.

¹⁰ Raise.

¹¹ Absolved.

¹² When they had advanced a good half distance towards their foes.

¹³ Thought.

¹⁴ Zoons ("by God's wounds").

¹⁵ Ready folk and well aware are these.

¹⁶ And more they know of battle than formerly they did.

¹⁷ God take our souls.

¹⁸ For our bodies are theirs.

¹⁹ This has given them confidence.

²⁰ Hope we might have yet.

²¹ Commended.

& in to bataile smite vaste among hor fon.
 &, as gode knitzes, to grounde flowe anon,¹
 That hor fon flowe sone thicke² mani on.
 Sir Warin of Blasingbourne, tho he this isei,
 Bivore he gan prikie, & to grede an hei,³
 'Azen, traitors, azen, & habbeth in ower thozt,
 Hou villiche⁴ at Lewes ze were to grounde ibroz.
 Turneth azen, & thencheth, that thut⁵ power al oure is,
 & we ssolle, as vor nozt, ouer cum vr fon iwis.'⁶
 Tho was the bataile strong in eith side, alas!
 Ac atten ende was binethe thulke,⁷ that feblore was.⁸
 & Sir Simond was aslawe, & is folk al to grounde.
 More murthre are nas in so lute stounde.⁹
 Vor there was werst Simond de Mountfort aslawe, alas!
 & Sir Henri is sone, that so gentil knitz was,
 & Sir Hue the Despencer, the noble Justise,
 & Sir Peris de Mountfort, that stronge were & wise.
 Sir Willam de Verous, & Sir Rauf Basset al so.
 Sir John de Sein Jon, Sir Jon Diue ther to.
 Sir William Trossel, Sir Gileberd of Eisnesfelde,
 & mani god bodi were aslawe there in thulke felde.
 & among alle othere mest reuthe it was ido,¹⁰
 That Sir Simon the olde man demembred was so.
 Vor Sir Willam Mautrauers (thonk nabbe he non¹¹)
 Carf him of fet & honde, & is limes mani on.
 & that mest pite was, hii ne bileuede nouzt this,¹²
 That is priue membres hii ne corue¹³ of iwis.
 & is heued¹⁴ hii smiten of, & to Wigemore it sende

¹ Brought them soon to earth,

² That they soon fled, these many are one.

³ To shout aloud.

⁴ Villainously.

⁵ Remember that the power is on our side.

⁶ And we should, as why not, o'ercome our foes, I wis?

⁷ But at last this proved the stronger.

⁸ That the feebler was.

⁹ Never was greater murder in so little time.

¹⁰ Most pity it was done.

¹¹ Thanks had he none.

¹² They would not believe this.

¹³ Cut.

¹⁴ Head.

To Dam Maud the Mortimer, that wel foule it ssende.
& of all that me him bilimede,¹ hii ne bledde nozt,² me sede,
& the harde here was is lich the nexte wede.
Suich was the morthre of Einesham (vor bataile non it was)."

¹ Of all his limbs.

² Not one did bleed.



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